



International Panel
for Sustainable
Resource Management



Achieving synergies in 2010-2011

1. Introduction

Sustainable resource management is currently high on the policy agenda, due to developments on international material markets, increasing prices and related development and environmental concerns. International organizations such as UNEP and the OECD, as well as the G8, are formulating responses, thereby also listening to the increasing calls for cooperation, integration and common vision.

The current biennium is decisive for influencing the upcoming thematic cycle on sustainable consumption and production of the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD), with review and policy discussions programmed for 2010 and 2011.

This paper presents a brief overview of some recent developments, which took place after the Budapest meeting in November 2007:

- UNEP's Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, which set the scene for UNEP's Medium Term Strategy 2010-2013 (see paragraph 2)
- the joint OECD UNEP International Conference on Resource Efficiency, which resulted in recommendations to OECD, UNEP (in particular its International Panel for Sustainable Resource Management) and G8 work programmes (see paragraph 3);
- the current status of the Marrakech process, which is developing and promoting a ten-year framework of national and regional initiatives on sustainable consumption and production, to be addressed at the CSD in 2010/2011 (see paragraph 4).

The Panel may wish to use this overview as a basis for a discussion on where and how to link, where to prove its added value and how to achieve synergies.

2. Resource efficiency has prominent role in UNEP's Medium Term Strategy 2010-2013

UNEP has formulated its overall vision to be the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, that promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and that serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment.

UNEP's Executive Director, Achim Steiner, presented the overall objectives of the new Medium Term Strategy 2010-2013 at the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF) meeting, held in Monaco, February 2008. The meeting welcomed the strategy, which proposed "Resource Efficiency/Sustainable Consumption and Production" (RE/SCP) as one of the six crosscutting priorities for the organization's future work programme. UNEP's Division of Technology, Industry and Economics is currently formulating a detailed strategy in cooperation with other Divisions. The Medium Term Strategy is up for discussion and approval in the next Governing Council meeting (25th session, 2009).

For the RE/SCP priority the general objective is that "natural resources are produced, processed and consumed in a more environmentally sustainable way".¹ UNEP's Deputy Director of the Division for Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE) has explained the objective as follows²:

"... we define resource efficiency in the broadest sense. You can very efficiently pollute the environment. And we can all very efficiently live our lives and increase our wealth, while others keep living in misery. We have called our priority 'RE/SCP'. The SCP stands for Sustainable Consumption and Production. We believe that RE is not a goal in itself, rather a means to achieve something. Resource efficiency means reducing the environmental impact of the consumption and production of goods and services over their full life cycle. The 'doing more with less' slogan indicates the focus on more outputs with fewer impacts (fewer resources, less pollution, fewer impacts on the conditions of poor people). Efficiency gains do however not guarantee that the overall outcome stays within the ecological carrying capacity of the Earth. Influencing the demand side is therefore another prerequisite for sustainable development. It will only be by a combination of resource efficiency and resource sufficiency measures that the ultimate goal of sustainable consumption and production patterns can be achieved."

As the document states, UNEP will promote the decoupling of growth in production and consumption of goods and services from resource depletion and environmental degradation, and will strengthen the scientific base for doing so. The application of environmentally sound technologies and integrated waste management will lead to the more efficient use of resources. Reforms in government policies, changes in private sector management practices and decisions, and increased consumer awareness are needed to achieve this decoupling. A mix of these approaches will be integrated to address inefficient and polluting production and consumption patterns, including through the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production under the Marrakech process. Public-private partnerships that promote more sustainable product life-cycles and supply chains will be a major focus of the work of UNEP.

The expected accomplishments are:

- (a) That resource efficiency is increased and pollution is reduced over product life cycles and along supply chains.

¹ UNEP/GCSS.X/8; also see www.unep.org for full materials

² Opening speech, by Per Bakken, Deputy Director DTIE, of OECD-UNEP Conference on Resource Efficiency, Paris, 23 April 2008

(b) That investment in efficient, clean and safe industrial production methods is increased through public policies and private sector action.

(c) That consumer choice favours more resource efficient and environmentally friendly products.

The Resource Panel with its substantive focus on achieving decoupling and its objective to provide authoritative scientific assessments is expected to play a major role in the implementation of the strategy, and with its reports help guide UNEP and other stakeholders to get a clear understanding of the sense of urgency, the objectives to achieve and the priority issues to address.

Questions the Panel may wish to address:

- *assessment of the various definitions and their linkages: resource efficiency, resource sufficiency, sustainable consumption and production, sustainable resource management*
- *assessment of the knowledge gaps for demonstrating the 'business case' for Resource Efficiency for the private and public sector*
- *assessment of role of consumer behavior and knowledge gaps*

3. OECD, UNEP and G8 stepping up efforts to promote resource efficiency

The OECD and UNEP organized an international Conference on Resource Efficiency in Paris, 23-25 April 2008. The meeting brought together around 200 participants from governments, business and other civil society organizations. The Resource Panel was well represented, with various members of the Panel, the Steering Committee and the Secretariat in active roles.

H.E. Mark Mwandosya, Tanzania's Minister for Water and Irrigation, and member of the Resource Panel Steering Committee, was co-chair of the conference, and stressed the fact that resource management is a topic of joint concern for developed and developing countries alike, "*we all live in the same global village.*" He also called for attention to specific needs of developing country decision-makers to improve their skills in resource management and governance, as well as for a strengthening of the UNEP/UNIDO network of Cleaner Production Centres which help small and medium sized enterprises (SME's) to address resource efficiency.

Panel co-chair Ernst Ulrich von Weizsaecker presented one of the keynote speeches, and called for a focus on resource *productivity*, which could bring about the necessary radical improvements in complex systems. He showed that despite the recent increases, overall resource prices were still in a long term downward trend and expected that resource productivity would be stimulated by increasing resource costs, similar to what increasing labor costs did for labor productivity. His presentation of the rebound effect (where despite resource efficiency increases the overall outcome can still be suboptimal due to volume effects) inspired many throughout the conference to call attention to the demand side and in particular consumer behaviour.

Other Panel/Steering Committee members with active roles include Timo Makela (who chaired the government perspective session), Stephan Bringezu (who spoke about the Material Flow Analysis toolbox and indicators), Edgar Hertwich (scientific knowledge of environmental impacts), and George Varughese (common challenges for middle and upper class consumers in developed and developing countries, limits of efficiency approaches, linkages with happiness, and the need for alternative business models).

Per Bakken, deputy Director of UNEP's Division of Technology, Industry and Economics, addressed in his opening speech the need to achieve synergies between various international initiatives, and suggested that the work of the Panel on decoupling contribute to the Marrakech Process: "*... the development of the ten-year framework on Sustainable Consumption and Production, as encouraged by the WSSD more than five years ago, has entered its decisive phase. The main goal of the framework is achieving decoupling. And we have to admit that despite all encouraging activities carried out so far by so many governments and task forces, we still have to make decisive and authoritative progress on defining what decoupling is, where we are at the moment, and how to bring it about.*"

The Chairs' Summary highlighted the timeliness of the initiative, with so many activities going on in countries (such as China, German and Japan), in the international community (OECD, UNEP, G8) and by the business sector (mining, manufacturing, recycling). Improving resource efficiency can indeed reduce negative environmental impacts of resource use over its life cycle, while at the same time securing adequate supplies of materials to sustain economic growth and reduce poverty.

The summary in particular stressed the fact that so many different concepts and approaches are now converging:

- 3R (reduce, re-use, recycle);
- sound material-cycle society (Japan);
- circular economy (China);
- integrated/sustainable waste management;
- sustainable consumption and production;
- life cycle management;
- sustainable resource management.

" ... *all aim*", according to the summary, "*at similar objectives and require similar action by the various stakeholders ... There is a need to develop a common vision about resource efficient societies, and communicate this vision to broader groups of stakeholders.*"

The conference pointed to the need to advance work on decoupling, indicators and statistics, development and dissemination of best practices, for instance for recycling ("urban mining") and waste management, including e-waste. The use of economic instruments should be encouraged more broadly.

The co-chairs explicitly requested the transmittal of their conclusions to the relevant G8 and OECD meetings, and to the next meeting of the UNEP International Panel for Sustainable Resource Management (19-20 May, 2008, Rome), and the UNEP Governing Council.

Questions the Panel may wish to address:

- *integrated assessment of the various definitions and their linkages: 3R, sound-material society, circular economy and integrated waste management in the context of sustainable consumption and production, life cycle management and sustainable resource management*
- *assessment of major economic instruments and their role in sustainable resource management*
- *assessment of rebound effect, gaps in knowledge and intervention points.*

4. Marrakech Process on Sustainable Consumption and Production in decisive phase

The Marrakech Process started in 2002 when the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), held in Johannesburg, called to "... *encourage and promote the development of a 10-year framework of programmes in support of regional and national initiatives to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production to promote social and economic development within the carrying capacity of ecosystems by addressing and, where appropriate, delinking economic growth and environmental degradation through improving efficiency and sustainability in the use of resources and production processes and reducing resource degradation, pollution and waste.*"

UNEP (in particular UNEP DTIE) and UN DESA (the UN Division hosting the secretariat of the Commission for Sustainable Development, CSD) organised a first international review meeting in June 2003 in Marrakech, Morocco, followed by similar meetings in 2005 and 2007. A broad regional consultation has been taking place, where in a multistakeholder format (governments, business, research, NGO's) participants formulated priorities for their region, and initiated projects. National roundtables were organised in Brazil, China, India and South Africa.

A small number of cross-cutting "Marrakech Task Forces" were initiated as well. These task forces have been carrying out various activities. Some focused on demonstrating the added value of policy instruments, such as awareness raising for sustainable lifestyles (led by Sweden), education (led by Italy), sustainable products (led by the UK), and procurement (Switzerland). Some focused on economic sectors, sustainable construction and building (Finland), and sustainable tourism (France). A German led task force focused on cooperation with Africa.

The ten-year framework or 'Global Framework for Action on SCP' will be reviewed in the 18th meeting of the CSD (2010), followed by a review of policy recommendations in the 19th meeting (2011).

This means that the Marrakech Process has entered its decisive phase: the proposal for a ten-year framework will need to be presented through a Secretary-General's report in the fall of 2009. UNEP and UN DESA will be consulting on objectives, working mechanisms, and priorities with policy makers, through multistakeholder conferences, bilaterally with other UN agencies, with development agencies, through informal meetings and side events, and through formal consultations with 'major groups' (major groups are - in UN terminology - women, children and youth, indigenous people, NGO's, local authorities, workers and trade unions, business and industry, scientific and technological communities, and farmers).

The core programmes of the ten-year framework have not yet been identified, but may include national action plans, sustainable procurement, responsible value chains, resource efficiency/LCA, education and sustainable lifestyles.

Work needs to be carried out to define what quantitative contribution a ten-year framework might have on achieving the goals of decoupling, what priority sectors (clusters, products, resources) to address, how to measure progress, how to set benchmarks, in global or regional perspective.

Questions the Panel may wish to address:

- *how can the Panel contribute to the Marrakech Process; could the Panel assess the current status of decoupling ('delinking economic growth and environmental*

degradation' as in the WSSD terminology) on global and/or regional level, with potential scope for improvements in defining and measuring?

- *how could the Panel's scoping group on scientific prioritization of resources and products assist in priority setting for the overall framework, for regional frameworks, or for global economic sectors/value chains.*
- *how could the eventual upcoming work on 'conceptual framework' identify and assess the potential of the various policy strategies to achieve resource efficiency or sustainable consumption and production?*