



Workshop Report

Sustainable Consumption and Production and the Green Economy: building linkages and synergies towards Rio+20

The following is a report from an informal workshop, attended by approximately 60 participants and organized by UNEP in Paris on 18-19 March 2010. The workshop had the following objectives.

- Explore current understanding of the concepts of “Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP)” and “Green Economy”, as well as related concepts such as “Green Growth”;
- identify linkages and potential synergies between relevant activities of UNEP and others on SCP and the Green Economy (GE);
- provide input to a draft paper on developing synergies and complementarities between activities and policies designed to promote SCP and build green economies; and
- inform the development of the 10 Year Framework of Programmes on SCP to be reviewed at CSD 19 and contribute to preparations for the Rio + 20 Summit, where “Green Economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication” is a core focus area.

This report summarizes key points from each of the four workshop sessions which focused on the relationship between the two concepts of GE and SCP and on specific challenges, needs and opportunities relating to the design and implementation of policies to promote SCP and build green economies. The report also identifies some potential areas of collaboration between the various institutions working on SCP, green growth (GG) and the green economy. Some insights on the treatment of these issues in ongoing and future international negotiations, including those in CSD 18, 19 and the Rio+20 Conference, are also offered.

The background paper prepared for the meeting will be revised on the basis of these outcomes from the workshop and any written comments that UNEP receives on that paper. Presentations are available at <http://www.unep.fr/scp/>. This workshop and the preparation of the background report was made possible by financial support from the Ministry of Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and the Sea (MEEDDM) of France.

Session 1: “SCP” and the “Green Economy”: Their meaning today and new initiatives

The first session focused primarily on conceptual discussions and clarifications with short presentations by the OECD, UNEP and TNO – Knowledge for Business (a think-tank on innovation). In the subsequent discussions and in the rest of the workshop there was general agreement that SCP, green economy and



green growth could be seen as mutually supportive but that more work was needed to further clarify the concepts.

- There is a need to move beyond business as usual. Conventional macro-economic measures, such as GDP, have clear shortcomings and core concepts such as “growth” need to be re-examined. Work on SCP also needs to address the social dimension, for example not only more efficient use of resources but also the influence of SCP policies on decent job creation.
- Given the recent multiple crises, there is a sense of urgency and need to speed up the pace of change. Technological leapfrogging was mentioned and the urgent need for appropriate indicators to measure progress towards a green economy.
- It was clear that Green Economy is both a process and an outcome. As a process, it includes, for example, “greening the brown economy”. In many cases, it also involves transitional costs and any positive social consequences from increased investments will not always follow quickly, nor automatically.
- It was often mentioned that one valuable contribution on the more recent work on GE/GG is that it brings different Ministries together, notably Environment, Economics, Trade and Finance Ministries. The need for an inter-ministerial coordination mechanism to implement governmental SCP action plans was also highlighted.
- One particular strength of SCP is its focus on behavioural change, innovation, and life-cycle analysis that resonates well with the business sector. Whilst macro-economic analysis can push for a top down approach in seeking to scale up the pace of change, and lead to proposals for new regulations, there remains a critical role for organizational level implementation and innovation to achieve SCP.
- While the need for a systems perspective was recognized, there were calls for “keeping the language simple”, and avoiding long theoretical, conceptual debates. There is a need to find ways of communicating core messages in simple and concise language to political leaders, consumers and other target audiences, and avoiding any suggestion of green-washing. There is a need to use common and consistent language to get the message on SCP across and explain the tools already available.

Session 2: Sectors and Regions

This session reviewed the challenges, specific needs of governments, responses and opportunities that arise in achieving SCP and moving towards a green economy. It was informed by a panel with representatives from the African, Asia-Pacific and North American regions.

- National SCP programmes tend to be driven by environment ministries – it is difficult to influence other ministries with these plans. It has proved difficult to get the SCP message across to those other ministries.
- There is recognition that in order to move towards SCP it can entail less overall consumption of certain goods and services, which raises concerns among developing countries in particular. The



need for a differentiated approach to SCP is obvious – more consumption is required where basic needs are not being met.

- Recent research shows very limited availability of sustainable products for consumers to purchase which is a major challenge.
- Food, financial, fuel and environmental crises are linked – this implies that integrated policy tools and mixes thereof are needed to address them. Combinations of policies and investments tend to have a larger effect in greening the economy.
- Support on policy making has to be delivered at national level where the decisions are made. There is a need for “common programming” of capacity building activities at country level, and that it be demand driven based on needs. This requires UNEP and other organizations to work closely with the government in designing and delivering support.
- It is also important to have the capacity to follow up on initial advice and support offered – these policies cannot be designed and effectively implemented overnight. Therefore long term engagement and continuity are key to effective capacity building.
- There is a place for innovative international responses. For example the Canadian government has developed a CSR strategy for extractive industries working overseas, to help improve practices focusing on resource use.
- Some regions, such as Africa, see the necessity for a global framework of action on SCP (referring to the 10-Year Framework of Programmes) and need support from international agencies, particularly with regard to building institutions and designing and implementing SCP policies.
- The capacity to apply resource efficient and sustainable technology is still lacking, even in developed countries. More North-South (and South-South) cooperation is required on this. Mainstreaming SCP and GE policies and tools is required not just in national planning and policy frameworks but also in donor planning frameworks.
- Social and cultural values in Asia such as gross national happiness open the way for SCP/GE. Many countries are ready to change if they can see a viable alternative to conventional models of growth. There is also a growing demand from a range of actors for support on SCP in Asia, including SMEs.
- There is a real opportunity to leapfrog in Africa to the next stage of development, using cleaner and more efficient technologies. However, this has to be captured now with support delivered at the national level.
- The many “communities of practice on SCP” offer big opportunities simply by bringing them together, sharing practices and replicating or building on them from the bottom-up.
- Efforts should be made to build on existing regional and sub-regional initiatives when delivering on Green Economy or SCP – e.g. the African Roundtable on SCP and the Asia Pacific Green Growth strategy could apply Green Economy policies, in addition to the SCP policies, management practices and consumer information tools they are already using.



Session 3: Defining policies, promoting collaboration

This session focused on a panel discussion among governments, international organisations and stakeholders, with very active participation from the floor, exploring the information, policies, actions and investments required to move towards SCP and greening the economy. Detailed examples of country level SCP actions were presented by the governments of France, Brazil and Mexico.

- It was underlined that the private sector brings practical know-how in life cycle analysis and financing.
- Consumers need reliable, verifiable information to understand the impact of their consumption choices.
- Education was emphasized many times by participants as a key to behavioural change. Education is not a narrow concept and is a life-long process. However, it was acknowledged that “absorptive capacity” and the ability to change is higher in youth.
- Green Economy tools and policies can be a vital instrument to support the shift to SCP.
- Establishing standards, self-regulation, partnerships and the soft technologies (eg environmental management systems) all have a role to play.
- There is need for governance at different levels – international, regional, national and local – to deliver SCP and a Green Economy. Those levels need to be connected but implementation must occur at the national level.
- Establishing infrastructure that supports sustainable lifestyles was seen as an essential component of any SCP strategy.
- Developing countries require capacity building on key tools and policies such as resource accounting and payment for ecosystem services which are essential for SCP. Finance for the shift to SCP is also critical at all levels, from global, to national, to enterprise and even down to household level. A range of financial mechanisms involving local banks will be required.
- There is a need to develop an alternative attractive vision of a sustainable world (eg the Vision 2050 work of the WBCSD). This vision is necessary to help businesses see and plan for the long term – it can be attractive as it sets out opportunities.
- Being ambitious is important, but a vision must be followed by action. This should build on key chapters of Agenda 21 relating to SCP and the Green Economy, including those on health and agriculture, and on outputs of initiatives and partnerships like the Marrakech Task Forces.

Session 4: Looking at Rio+20 and beyond

The concluding session focused on looking ahead and moving towards Rio+20 and striking the right balance between various concepts such as SCP and GE. The session also touched upon the draft background report and sought to obtain guidance and input from participants on research, awareness-raising, capacity-building and policies required.



- It was mentioned that there is an urgent need to further clarify the concepts of Green Economy and SCP before CSD18. However, it was also suggested to focus on policy tools and concrete projects instead of endless discussions on the concepts themselves.
- It was noted by some participants that the concept of SCP has a longer history and more government buy-in than the relatively newer concept of GE. SCP was viewed as an overarching goal for sustainable development, with high-level government commitment. Others noted that GE was an important, fresh concept that might bring new impetus to the debate on SCP.
- The importance of using a positive approach to SCP was stressed by one participant. It was noted that consumer choice editing (the practice of regulating to ban the sale of particularly environmentally damaging products) is not a viable political option in some countries. In those cases, expanding consumption options and letting consumers decide for themselves can be more feasible.
- There was widespread recognition of the possibility of improving and documenting the economic case for SCP and not least improving and making more explicit the linkages to poverty eradication.
- In light of the complex nature of both SCP and GE agendas it was stressed that active involvement of stakeholders will be crucial in preparing for Rio+20 and defining the policies and investments required to move towards SCP, a Green Economy and to achieve sustainable development.

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