

Minutes of Online Regional Consultation with Member States in the Asia-Pacific region

The online regional consultation with member states of the Asia-Pacific region on “**Mainstreaming coherent and effective sustainable consumption and production policies, including through circular economy models: Best practices and recommendations**” was held on Wednesday, September 16, 2020, at 1400-1600 ICT.

The consultation was organized by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in collaboration with its implementing partner, The Joint Graduate School of Energy and Environment, King Mongkut’s University of Technology Thonburi (JGSEE-KMUTT) Bangkok, Thailand.

The contact detail of the participants from the Member States of the region are available in Annex.

Opening Remarks:

1. The online regional consultation started with the opening remarks by Dr. Mushtaq A. Memon, Regional Coordinator for Resource Efficiency at UNEP, Asia-Pacific Regional Office- Bangkok, Thailand.

Introduction of the regional consultation and UNEA-4 Resolution

2. Following the opening remarks, Ms. Claire Thiebault, Economy Division, UNEP welcomed the participants. She informed the participants that UNEP is convening online regional consultations in all regions across the world during September 2020 as UNEP is preparing for the fifth session of the UN Environmental Assembly (UNEA-5), which will be held in February 2021. She alluded to the informative session held on July 29, 2020, where Member States were briefed about the process of consultation and the implementation of the Resolution on Innovative pathways to achieve sustainable consumption and production. She briefly talked about the purposes of the online consultation and engaging with the Member States.
3. Ms. Claire stressed that through the online consultation, UNEP is seeking feedback from the Member States. She informed participants that UNEP is looking forward to receiving inputs from the Member States for the implementation of the resolution.
4. After the introductory remarks, Ms. Claire explained the agenda of the online consultation. She explained the structure of the consultation and encouraged the participants to share their experiences either verbally or using the chat functions of the Zoom platform. She also informed that UNEP appreciates receiving written feedback and submissions by the end of September 2020.
5. Ms. Claire provided an overview of the UNEA-4 resolution on innovative pathways to achieve sustainable consumption and production, and mentioned that it was adopted in March 2019 during the fourth session of UNEA (UNEA-4), sponsored by Indonesia, Japan, Colombia, Chile, and the member countries of the European Union (EU). She acknowledged the financial support of the European Commission for the implementation of the specific mandate of paragraph 15.
6. Ms. Claire mentioned that UNEP was requested to produce a global inventory of coherent product policies, a collection of good examples of innovative design practices of products and services and their impacts, and formulate recommendations on the potential of coherent product policies and

innovative design practices of product and services to support the transition to sustainable consumption and production. She asked the participants from the Member States to share their feedback about the difficulties and challenges and also success stories in these areas so that UNEP can build recommendations based on the provided information.

7. Ms. Claire also explained the notion of product policy and gave some examples of the product policies. Following that, she briefly informed the participants that the consultation questions are on the key elements of UNEA-4 resolution, covering the product policies, innovative design practices of product and services, and the role of the international community.
8. She encouraged the participants to share their experiences both during the consultation and after that through email. Contact details for the inputs and feedback were provided to the participants.

Status overview of the inventory of product policies

1. Prof. Shabbir H. Gheewala, from JGSEE-KMUTT, provided the status overview of the inventory of product policies. He informed the audience of the list of member states who have participated in sharing their product policy information. He elaborated that in some countries, the product policies either do not exist or are in the development stages. He added that in some countries, some product policies are in place and he provided examples from Singapore (Singapore Zero Waste Masterplan) and Indonesia (standards, environmental labels and consumer information on paper products and regulations of plastic use).
2. Prof. Shabbir also provided more detailed product policy examples from Japan (Sound Material-Cycle Society) and Korea (the promotion of ecolabel and purchase of green products, as well as awareness for green consumption). He also provided some product policy examples from Vietnam's National Action Plan on SCP. He added that India has a draft of National Policy on Resource Efficiency, where India is focusing on ecolabelling and extended producer responsibility.

Deep dive: product policies in Thailand

1. Dr. Thumrongrut Mungcharoen talked on behalf of the Thai SCP network. He mentioned that several stakeholders are involved in this network and the Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning (ONEP) of Thailand is involved in policy and planning under the Ministry of Natural Resource and Environment of Thailand. He added that the Department of Environmental Quality Promotion (DEQP) and Pollution Control Department (PCD) are responsible for the sustainable lifestyle and sustainable public procurement. He talked about the certificate schemes of green products and services of Thailand and mentioned that DEQP is responsible for the green scheme. Thailand Greenhouse Gas Management Organization (TGO) is responsible for carbon labeling schemes. Pollution Control Department (PCD) is involved in Green Public Procurement (GPP) which was initiated in 2008 and has now entered into its 3rd phase. He briefly talked about the Thailand SCP Roadmap 2017-2037, consisting of three main sectors of sustainable production (industry, agriculture and food, and tourism and services) and three sectors of sustainable consumption (GPP and ecolabeling, city and local government, education and lifestyle).

2. Currently, the SCP network is trying to cluster the product and services, and use it in the “green basket” of Thailand. The products and services approved by PCD are listed in the green basket. The selection criteria is based on the provided information considering different aspects of life cycle assessment (LCA) approach and the type of impacts considered. Based on this information, it can be decided whether a product or a service is listed as greenest (i.e. level 1) to least green (i.e. level 4). The government purchases the products and services listed in the basket, starting from level 1 to level 4, depending upon its availability.
3. He talked about the green labelling of the product and services and “green basket”. He added that based on the Act of Ministry of Finance, the government can purchase the products approved by the PCD, and are included in the basket.

Overview of good examples of design practices in the region

1. Prof. Shabbir provided an overview of the examples of innovative design practices in the region. He talked in detail about the design for recyclability of the office copies by Fuji Xerox Eco-manufacturing in Thailand. He explained that Fuji Xerox has designed the copier in a way that helps recycling and refurbishing of the machine through a closed loop system, which enables to reduce landfilling and illegal dumping. It is not only a thought process but has actually been successfully implemented and it may encourage other industries to adopt a similar innovative approach.

Interactive discussion:

Following Prof. Shabbir’s talk, Dr. Mushtaq opened the floor for the discussion and also moderated the discussion. The discussion was structured around the following three key questions:

(1) How have product policies in your country been instrumental to preserve the environment?

What are the enabling conditions for higher impact of product policies?

How to create coherence among product policies?

India:

1. Dr. Bhawna Singh from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change of India mentioned that the government of India has many policies that focus on specific sectors and specific life cycle stages pertaining to sustainable consumption and production. For example, water-efficient agriculture schemes; schemes in the industrial sector to reduce GHG emissions through a market-driven mechanism; and labelling of electrical appliances that helps the consumers to track the energy consumption and saving potential of the appliances. All these schemes/policies are sector-specific. To bring coherence among different types of policies, India is formulating the “National resource efficiency policy” which aims to mainstream resource efficiency across all economic sectors and develop coherence among different policies of the different sectors. The policy on resource efficiency brings the idea of life cycle approach,

considering all resources and all sectors in view of the life cycle perspective. India believes that stakeholder participation is very relevant to develop coherence among different policy instruments and raise awareness. To this end, leveraging government procurement and the standards/certification linked to the use of secondary material produced can be instrumental to create a market for sustainable products/services. Through the “National resource efficiency policy”, India is bringing the overarching features to the specific policies instruments/measures that are already present and also covers the broad resources range through bringing all the biotic and abiotic resources across the whole life cycle chain. This is the recent development in India.

2. She added that there is a high political push to the agenda of managing plastic pollution in India. Through the Prime Minister of India’s call to end single use plastic, awareness was brought into the masses to act as responsible citizens and to rationally use the plastic products. Plastic waste management rules mandate several new provisions including provision of EPR, where producers have to collect back the waste and the urban bodies have to provide the supporting infrastructure systems so that recovery systems are introduced in the region.

Indonesia:

1. Mr. Noer Adi Wardoyo from Ministry of Environment and Forestry of Indonesia mentioned that some products like paper products remained under sustainability discussion for many years and now plastic is also being focused. Considering the pulp and paper industry, the resource use efficiency (energy and water) has largely been focused in the past and needs to move further as well, where all stakeholders are agreed. However, other natural resources sustainability i.e. sustainable forest management and the issue of deforestation, though a tough issue, but stakeholders can understand how to deal with it. On the consumption side, the paper industry understands that there will be less paper use in the future due to the trends of the paperless office, less paper, e-office, but they can also foresee that the economic and population growth will compensate the industry. In short, the paper industry is ready to embrace the journey to sustainability.
2. Regarding plastic, he mentioned that the 3R principles have been discussed for quite some time. But the real issue is, how far we can go with recycling. He expressed his concerns that the best achievement of recycling schemes is just the numbers but it is not meeting the actual expectations. He added that we cannot do recycling as much as possible, that is the reality we need to accept. However, some innovations, like biodegradable plastics may help. The idea of circular economy, separation and recycling are being popular, but we need to know that the circular economy and recycling will not completely solve all the problems. At this point, we need to start discussing that what would be the proportion of the solution through innovation like degradability and which proportion of the issue will be addressed through circular economy and recycling. The scenarios of the end game are now much more important and need to be discussed. For instance, considering life cycle perspective, the use of fossil fuel and renewable energy, all come with environmental impacts, can bring about a very interesting discussion. There will be no perfect clean and green product in the end. This discussion of the impacts comes very fast but the

advancement in the innovations in the design of the product comes very slow. The world without plastic is impossible.

3. Change in the social behaviour is the only option and should come first for sustainable consumption. For instance, the ban on single-use plastic in Jakarta. The recommendation was made to promote the use of reusable bags made up of textile, plastic, or any other material. It's not about the product or the material, but the behaviour. It is a policy that eventually drives toward responsible behaviour. Dr. Mushtaq acknowledged the point made by Indonesia and further added that many other countries are now moving towards green consumerism, sustainable lifestyle and green communities.
4. Mr. Noer Adi added that ASEAN will work on promoting the SCP framework. ASEAN has a large population and market. We are now trying to connect communities. There are different networks of SCP practitioners in different countries in ASEAN.
5. He mentioned that the Ministry of Environment will work with the association of pulp and paper industry, and the plastic industry. The government is planning to synchronize efforts for new greener products considering the environmental criteria which will be having more recycling content with only domestic waste but not imported plastic. The government is inviting the financial institutions to join and work to support this effort.

Thailand:

1. Dr. Thumrongrut stated that several countries in ASEAN have developed plastic-related policies and regulations. He added that the budget of the Thailand government has been moving and focusing more on the services sector e.g. investing on renting green buildings. Therefore, green building and green hotel certification system is becoming more important.
2. The Thailand Greenhouse Gas Management Organization (Public Organization) (TGO) certification scheme promotes carbon footprint labelling. It is an integrated labelling scheme and having a high impact. Many products in Thailand have been certified. Energy and carbon labelling are very important to be focused in the Asia Pacific region.
3. About the green organizations, setting criteria to produce and to purchase green products will help the organizations to reduce their environmental impacts.
4. Green card application: Thailand is following a good example from Korea which is quite successful. In Korea, the green card user gets points upon purchasing the green products and services and those points will be used for public services. However, in Thailand, different banks and shopping malls have their individual card schemes and therefore in Thailand, it is not quite successful. DEQP is promoting it and working with the Federation of Thai Industries, but still it is an ongoing activity in Thailand.
5. GPP came into being for more than ten years but quite slow in Thailand so we should move to services sector. The Ministry of Finance is also having an Act which promotes GPP.

(2) How is your country performing in identifying and taking up innovative design practices of products/services, which minimize harmful environmental impacts?

What are the requirements to implement, replicate and scale up such design practices?

India:

1. Dr. Bhawna Singh mentioned that India has an electric vehicle promoting policy which is now in the second phase, launched under the Electricity Mobility Machine Plan. It is named “Faster Adopting and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles” which supports the electric vehicle market development and manufacturing ecosystem. On being asked regarding impacts related to vehicle exports to neighbouring countries, she said that she would share some written information at a later stage.

Iran:

1. Ms. Mastoreh Eshraqui from the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran narrated that Iran has many programmes related to the green economy and a good environment for more than 10 years. There are several programmes about electric cars, a green lifestyle and changing behaviours of people, etc. However, Iran is facing different problems due to sanctions on the country which is hindering the successful implementation of these programmes. Therefore, Iran needs support from the international community and organization for solving these issues.

Indonesia:

1. Mr. Noer Adi Wardoyo stated that Indonesia has some advanced plan for research and development by the government consisting of the innovations in low carbon area, higher quality and renewable fuel, which we see as very promising. He added that Thailand and Malaysia and some other countries in ASEAN may follow the same research and innovation plan. That may be considered as the second stage of the development of the ASEAN SCP framework. It can be a very strong move if the Member Countries in ASEAN do it together.

Thailand:

1. Dr. Thumrongrut Mungcharoen pointed out the ASEAN is facing the transboundary issue on plastic waste and e-waste when China stopped importing it. Therefore, some member countries in ASEAN including Thailand are adopting innovative circular economy approaches to use the waste within the country, which is an ongoing programme in Thailand. Secondly, Thailand has been working in the industrial sector to develop innovative designs to be less polluting industries, including electric vehicles that Thailand is also trying to promote. In the area of gasoline, Thailand is also promoting biofuel and clean fuel. For instance, B7 consisting of 7 % biodiesel in diesel and E10 consisting of 10 % ethanol in gasoline.

(3) What role should UNEP, the UN system and the wider international community play in addressing gaps and challenges highlighted during the above discussions?

Indonesia:

1. Mr. Noer Adi Wardoyo suggested that we need to have an integrated framework for the stakeholders to connect and work together, to develop plans, connect stakeholders, share the plans, be the first mover and encourage the practitioners to get involved.
2. Communication approach, people should know where to go in connection with the sustainability concept. For example, the debate choosing among plastic and reusable paper bags for shopping. We need to communicate and convey a clear message to the common people about the outcome of responsible consumption. People are getting confused with the idea of responsible consumption and a clear message from UNEP may help to address this issue.

Thailand:

1. Dr. Thumrongrut mentioned that UNEP can play an important role in solving the transboundary issue of plastic waste and e-waste issues. This is not only the problem in Thailand but other countries in the region are facing this problem, where UNEP can play a role through promoting the circular economy and to address this issue.

India:

1. Dr. Bhawna Singh mentioned that UNEP is already helping through SWITCH Asia, regional policy advocacy, PAGE and the task force on sustainable public procurement, etc. Further, UNEP can play a role through knowledge sharing of sector-specific policies and information sharing among countries of similar socio-economic situation to address the common challenges, considering the life cycle perspective.

Next steps & closure

1. Prof. Shabbir acknowledged the contributions from the Member States through bilateral communication and through this online consultation. He acknowledged the product policy examples and experiences shared by the participants including India, Indonesia and Thailand which gives motivation and will be helpful to other Member Countries to engage further and provide information on their country-specific product policies. He mentioned that it was important to learn in terms of what is needed by the member countries, for example the challenges faced by Iran and other countries. Those countries might have developed product policies but different countries may be facing different issues in the implementation of those product policies. UNEP may facilitate the implementation of those product policies.
2. The online consultation ended with the closing remarks by Ms. Claire Thiebault from the UNEP Economy Division.

Annex: List of the participants

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