SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION INDICATORS FOR THE FUTURE SDGS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the course of the ongoing discussions and negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda, a consensus emerged that current and future social, environmental and economic challenges are interlinked and must be addressed through an integrated approach. In the introduction of the outcome document of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), *The Future We Want,* poverty eradication, the promotion of sustainable consumption and production (SCP) and the protection and management of natural resources are outlined as the "*overarching objectives of and essential requirements for sustainable development*" (UNGA Resolution 66/288, paragraph 4).

In the same spirit of pursuing focused and coherent action on sustainable development, the intergovernmental Open Working Group (OWG) on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) put forward, in July 2014, a proposal comprising 17 goals and 169 targets. The proposal makes achieving sustainable consumption and production (SCP) an integral component of the SDGs. SCP is reflected as a crosscutting enabler (in the form of both targets and means of implementation) for the achievement of many of the SDGs as well as in a stand-alone goal 12 on "ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns".

Achieving the SDGs will first require translating the goals and targets into tangible and measurable objectives. A set of indicators is needed to monitor the interface between the economy, environment and society, and the resource use and waste flows that result from consumption and production activities. These indicators must also be designed to show whether and at what rate progress is being made towards sustainable consumption and production (SCP) patterns. There is a need to provide information to assist Member States in the identification of such indicators, strengthen the science base for designing policies and actions which support the shift to SCP patterns, and raise overall awareness of the sustainable development benefits that can be derived from a shift to SCP patterns.

To this end, the present discussion paper highlights a number of potential indicators for a sub-set of the SCP-related targets in the proposed SDGs. The purpose is to contribute to the development of an integrated, science-based set of indicators to monitor progress towards SCP patterns which supports the achievement of the SDGs. An effort is made to identify indicators which can be applied to measure more than one target, and which contribute to making them transformative by building inter-linkages and complementarities between the targets and the goals which they underpin. The report also attempts to show that the use of positive indicators can help illustrate the return on investment in SCP. Wherever possible, positive indicators were selected in preference to others, to highlight benefits from SCP and to show that such progress could be the starter of virtuous circles of action.

The report highlights the value of a stand-alone goal on ensuring SCP patterns, as well as the importance of having SCP-related targets in other goals, to ensure greater synergies between the goals. The report explores the lack of data availability for measuring progress and the technical and capacity issues faced by many countries with respect to collecting and reporting data necessary to operationalize SCP-related indicators for the SDGs. These challenges imply an elaborated and strengthened role on local and national monitoring and data collection for national statistical offices and relevant ministries, particularly Ministries of Environment.

The report gives greater attention to identifying indicators for which data are currently available and also seeks to define which additional data and analysis are required. However in cases where specific indicators were seen as extremely relevant to measuring SCP-related targets, they are mentioned as important in the document, despite lack of information and data limitations.

During the preparatory work for this report, a first analysis resulted in identification of around 200 indicators with multiple indicators for each target. To assist Member States and other stakeholders in considering potential indicators, these have been filtered and prioritized to reach a more manageable set of indicators, organized into six domains which can support a shift to SCP patterns. These domains include (1) scale of resource use, (2) decoupling, (3) environmental impact, (4) technology and lifestyles, (5) financing and investing for SCP, and (6) policy support for SCP. The following table summarises the six SCP domains outlined above, linking them through SCP-related indicators (second column). Every domain can be represented by a limited set of headline indicators which can serve as proxies for making progress towards SCP and the SDGs.

Table 1: Proposed headline indicators and relationship to targets under the SDGs

Domain	Indicators	Related targets
Scale of resource use	• Domestic Material Consumption (DMC) – absolute and per-capita values • Material footprint (MF) – absolute and per-capita values	Target 12.2
Decoupling economic activity from resource use and environmental impact	• National material efficiency –material productivity (GDP per unit of material use). Production side: Material use measured through Domestic Material Consumption (DMC) Consumption side: material use measured through Material footprint (MF)	Targets 8.4, 12.2
	• National energy efficiency – Energy productivity (GDP per unit of energy use).	Targets 7.3, 8.4, 12.2
Impacts	• Contaminants in air, water, and soil from industrial sources, agriculture, transport and wastewater and waste treatment plants.	Targets 2.4, 3.9, 6.3, 12.4
	• Number of persons killed or injured by a natural and technological disaster and economic losses in USD.	Targets 1.5, 3.9, 11.5, 12.4
	• Ocean health – Ocean Health Index	Targets 14.7, 12.b
Technology and lifestyles	• Sectoral material and energy efficiency	Targets 7.3, 8.4, 12.2
	• Market share of goods and services certified by independently verified sustainability labelling schemes	Targets 4.7, 12.6, 12.8
Financing and investing to transform the economy to SCP	• Amount of R&D spending on environmentally sound technologies	Targets 12.a (impact on 12.1, 12.2, 8.4)
	• Amount of fossil fuel subsidies, per unit of GDP (production and consumption), and as proportion of total national expenditure on fossil fuels	Target 12.c (impact on 12.2, 7.2)
Policy support for SCP	• Number of countries with SCP National Actions Plans or SCP mainstreamed as a priority into national policies, poverty reduction strategies and sustainable development strategies.	Targets, 12.1, 12.7, 11.b, 17.16 (impact on 2.4, 4.7, 8.4, 8.9, 9.a, 12.2, 12.3, 12.8, 12.a, 12.b)
	• Number of countries with inter-ministerial coordination and multi-stakeholder mechanisms supporting the shift to SCP.	Target 12.1, 12.4, 12.6

These indicators could help policy makers and other stakeholders guide progress towards a sub-set of the SCP-related SDG targets in the currently proposed SDGs. Such indicators could be useful to: define the actions required to achieve those targets; assess the possibilities to measure progress towards them; and help build these targets into an integrated, synergistic and transformative whole.

Introduction

It has become ever more important to understand and help resolve the important social and environmental challenges of our time. This is the main aim of the sustainable development goals (SDGs); an aim shared by the concepts and practices of Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP). The concept of SCP links economic processes to the environment and natural resources and provides policy instruments and tools to encourage cleaner production and responsible consumption. It arose out of a definitional process, based both on practice and on international negotiations that took place over several decades. A broadly and commonly accepted definition of SCP today refers to "the production and use of services and related products, which respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life while minimizing the use of natural resources and toxic materials as well as the emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle of the service or product so as not to jeopardize the needs of future generations". This is derived from a closely related definition of sustainable consumption generated in a multi-stakeholder workshop in Norway in 1994 (UNEP 2012; Norway Ministry of Environment 1994).[1]

The outcome document of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), *The Future We Want*, calls for "protecting and managing the natural resource base for economic and social development", providing renewed appreciation that natural resources and well-functioning ecosystems are a necessary condition of human development. Poverty eradication, the promotion of sustainable consumption and production (SCP), and the protection and management of natural resources are outlined as the *"overarching objectives of and essential requirements for sustainable development"* (United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution 66/288, paragraph 4). Presently, SCP is seen as a fundamental instrument for mitigating environmental degradation and resource depletion that often result from economic growth. SCP policies and programmes summarized in the Ten Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10YFP) are helping to secure the resource base which underpins development by enhancing resource efficiency. Higher resource efficiency contributes to minimizing directly harmful effects on humans and to reducing pressure on ecosystems and their ability to provide essential goods and services. SCP thus is key in establishing the fundamentals for increasing quality of life for all (UNEP 2012).

An important outcome from Rio+20 was the mandate to establish an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process aiming to develop global sustainable development goals (SDGs). Covering high priority issues in all dimensions of sustainable development, the SDGs will be universally applicable to all UN Member States and will take the place of the expiring Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The outcome document *The Future We Want* mandated the creation of an intergovernmental Open Working Group (OWG) tasked with putting together a proposal for SDGs for consideration by the General Assembly, and for adoption at the UN Sustainable Development