

SDG 12 interventions

UNECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development 2018

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Session 1: Olga Ponizova

1) Despite some success in governance, institutional and policy approaches we don't feel there is enough prerequisite for SCP implementation.

We need better regulation of unsustainable economic practices (for instance: stricter rules on animal testing, or regulation of the growing amount of wastes and in particular plastic packaging, chemical management needs to be addressed by legislation and economic instruments),

High level political will as well as cooperation with all the stakeholders, including civil society and CSOs are crucial to regulate unsustainable practices and to encourage sustainable practices.

We need more policy coherence. We support today's intervention of Moldova on importance on trade for achieving of SDGs. We need to make trade working for sustainable development, to use trade tools as a driver for economic development, well-being raising, environmental protection and increase its contribution for achieving sustainable consumption and production.

2) We need real greening the business practice, especially support for SME

We need more focus on capacity building and education, support for investments and innovations, exchange of experience and best practices for SME in sustainable use of resources, wastes management, water and sanitation, energy, energy, agriculture.

3) More focus on public awareness and education is needed to change unsustainable behaviours

To achieve sustainable development it is important to change values and behaviours of people of all ages and social groups. Despite many interesting and important educational and awareness programs related to environmental protection, wastes, energy have been implemented, but results for the society at large have not been achieved yet and we need to continue our efforts in this field.

We need to bridge the gap between knowledge and practice in this field, to make unsustainable consumerism is not attractive as a model, but citizens also have rights to buy products that are free of toxics, free of labour rights violations or negative environmental impact.

Session 2: intervention by Patrizia Heidegger

1.) Challenges of circular economy

We feel that the RFSD Forum does not acknowledge the limits of the circular economy (CE): currently something between 5-7% of our economies are circular and our economies will never be fully circular, we use resources that cannot be recovered and recycled and we use more and more of them. A fully circular economy is a utopian vision, a vision we should strive towards with all means while acknowledging the reality that CE alone is not sufficient to reach SDG12. Let me illustrate this with one example: Sweden presented a case study in the first part of this round table. One best practice example from Sweden is lowering VAT for repair services, a great measure to promote SCP. However, even though Sweden is a front runner in SCP we just need to look at some key economic data: the Swedish economy grows, material consumption increases proportionally. Even some of the most advanced countries in terms of SCP are unable to really decouple resource consumption from economic growth: the economy grows, material use grows despite all these great actions. It is a hot potato but it would be great to talk in such a panel about policy options for the path towards a post-growth society and economy. We need to be frank about which parts of economy can still grow, which need to degrow or eventually vanish (for instance, energy production based on fossil fuels, plastic production, production of toxic chemicals etc.). This Forum should discuss the paradigm of continuous economic growth in a critical way and exchange about how to ensure jobs and well-being in a post-growth scenario.

2.) Transparency in value chains

Of course, we need better transparency throughout value chains. Responsible citizens that take sustainable decisions as consumers are key and many of us CSOs are involved in creating transparency through supply chains and raising awareness. However, what we need next to aware consumers are legal obligations for businesses to act with due diligence throughout their supply and value chain. We need to be able to hold them accountable for negative environmental and social impacts. The concept note focuses too much on educating consumers rather than the question of how to regulate unsustainable business practices through legal requirements and incentives. Next week, the 3rd session of the IGWG drafting the Treaty on Business and HR will take place here in the Palais des Nation. We call on the governments to constructively engage in this process and work towards a legally binding treaty on business and human rights.

3.) Food waste

We heard about how governments can help to raise citizens' awareness, but this is one area in which we need clear regulation as well as incentives for business to reduce food waste drastically. Best practice example for policy makers: in 2016, France became the first country in the world to prohibit supermarkets from throwing away unused food. Other policies require schools to teach students about food sustainability, companies to report food waste statistics in environmental reports, and restaurants to make take-out bags available. The example shows how we can and have to sanction unsustainable business practices - which brings me back to the moderators initial statement that we all do need sanctions sometimes and voluntary measures are not enough. Take away food is another problem –

an unsustainable practice for which only bio-degradable packing from natural material or reusable packing materials should be allowed for. I can only reiterate my colleague Anja's call from her opening statement that UN conference should stop the use of disposable food packaging at their venues including plastic water bottles and throw-away coffee cups. We all need to lead by example.