

SECTION I A: Introduction/ Executive Summary



United Nations
ESCAP

Second Green Growth Policy Dialogue:
The Role of Public Policy in Providing Sustainable Consumption
Choices: The Resource-Saving Society and Green Growth

Green
Growth



Executive Summary

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Sustainable consumption is now emerging as a necessary condition for continued economic growth in the Asia Pacific region. It is not only an environmental concept but a necessary prerequisite for continued economic growth in the future.

As the prices of natural resources continue to increase and the ecological footprints generated by industry proliferate, the constraints on economic growth will become more and more apparent and the need to improve the eco-efficiency of the economic growth pattern more urgent.

As the growth pattern is defined by the sum of production and consumption patterns, when the consumption pattern deteriorates and the production increases the overuse of natural resources would create serious impediments to continued economic growth. Since the countries in the region are beginning to feel already this increasing pressure sustainable consumption and eco-efficiency are no longer simply a matter of individual consumer choice but something the public sector has to systematically pursue especially developing countries.

It is important that the public sector provides consistent policy interventions to steer and enhance the eco-efficiency of consumption patterns. By regulating and stimulating sustainable consumption, the public sector can create a favorable and conducive environment for more necessary investments that lead to sustainable consumption choices, such as sustainable infrastructure projects.

As the globalization process continues to expand across the region, unsustainable consumption patterns will increase, developing countries must take action even at the early stages of development to prevent these unsustainable patterns from becoming entrenched.

Last year, in March 2005, during the 5th Ministerial Conference on Environment Development for Asia and the Pacific, countries unanimously adopted the novel approach of “Green Growth” as a unique regional conceptual framework for pursuing economic growth in an environmentally sustainable manner. The Green Growth approach was also recommended as a unique instrument for achieving MDG 1 on Poverty Reduction and MDG 7 on Environmental Sustainability.

Green Growth seeks to harmonize economic growth with poverty reduction and improved well-being with environmental sustainability, while improving the eco-efficiency of economic growth and of consumption patterns, and enhancing the synergy between the environment and the economy. To improve the eco-efficiency of economic growth, there is a need to improve the eco-efficiency of the production and consumption patterns of society.

As a follow up to the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), the

need to change the way societies produce and consume as called for in Chapter 3 of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPol) and the 10-year framework of programmes for sustainable consumption and production (Marrakech Programme), UNESCAP has developed a regional project on “Policy options for improving the sustainability of consumption patterns in Asia and the Pacific by linking cultural values and traditional lifestyles”. The project was supported by the Government of the Republic of Korea as a follow up from the 5th MCED and as one of the implementation modalities of the green growth concept.

The activities of the project have demonstrated the opportunities for improving sustainable consumption in the Asia and Pacific region through improving the eco-efficiency of the economic growth patterns. Public policy has an important role to play while employing the potential of:

- Consumption patterns addressed by consistent public policy interventions;
- Investment for sustainable infrastructure;
- Regulations for improving the eco-efficiency of consumption;
- Traditional lifestyles and cultural values.

The project has also addressed the recommendations from the regional consultation processes on sustainable consumption and production. The First (*Marrakech, June 2003*) and the Second (*San Jose, September 2005*) International Expert Meetings emphasised the need to promote social and economic development within the carrying capacity of the environment. These meetings highlighted the need for de-linking 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.

In the framework of the regional project, the Second Green Growth Policy Dialogue on the Role of Public Policy in Providing Sustainable Consumption Choices: Resources Saving Society and Green Growth, held from 23 to 25 May 2006 in Beijing, China, was organized by UNESCAP in collaboration with the National Development and Reform Commission of China (NDRC) and the China Standard Certification Centre (CSC) and with the generous funding from the Government of the Republic of Korea, the Government of Norway, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES).

It was attended by more than 80 participants from Ministries of Finance, Ministries of Planning, Ministries of Industry and Development, and the Ministries of Environment of 15 member states, representatives of UN Organizations and development agencies, NGOs, private sector and research institutions.

The Policy Dialogue reviewed whether sustainable consumption is relevant to developing countries. The meeting concluded that though sustainable consumption is well promoted in the Western part of the world, it is also a concept embedded in the traditional Asian value system. Moreover, it is not only an environmental concept, but a necessary economic condition for pursuing eco-efficient economic growth in developing countries in the region.

The Second Policy Dialogue on Green Growth focused on the potential role of Governments and the public sector in applying the green growth approach to improving the eco-efficiency of consumption patterns. It is remarkable that a major economic power such as the People's Republic of China has already taken significant steps to improve its ecological efficiency of rapid economic growth by pursuing the bold and ambitious Resource Saving Society Initiative. It is hoped that other countries in the region will soon follow suit. At the policy dialogue, M-me. Zhao Jiarong, Director-General, Department of Environment and Resource Conservation, National Development and Reform Commission of P.R. China (NDRC) announced the following six major national measures in pursuit of green growth and a resources saving society:

- To establish sound legislation, regulation and standardization framework;
- To speed up optimization of the industrial structure, including improvements of energy consumption and use of high quality and alternative energy;
- To promote improvement of technological processes and scientific research for energy efficiency and recycling technologies;
- To improve energy consumption management;
- To develop appropriate and further improve existing incentive policies;
- To develop new tools and mechanism such as energy efficiency labelling and energy and water conservation product certification to guide and provide sustainable consumption choices for consumers.

The participants at the 2nd Green Growth Policy Dialogue also agreed to establish a regional Help Desk on Sustainable Consumption and Production in Asia and the Pacific by UNESCAP and UNEP and to be hosted by the China Standard Certification Centre, which is expected to provide increased opportunities for networking, information sharing and capacity building in the area of sustainable consumption and production.

With this publication, UNESCAP presents a compilation of the main debates of the 2nd Green growth Policy Dialogue meeting through short articles and presentations, as well as the main conclusions.

Wish you every success in your future endeavours.