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**Summary of the discussions by representatives of the South
Eastern European countries at the regional Workshop
“Sustainable Consumption and Production and the Green
Economy – experiences and good practices”**

Submitted by Croatia and Serbia

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Summary of the discussions by representatives of the South Eastern European (SEE) countries at the regional Workshop “Sustainable Consumption and Production and the Green Economy – experiences and good practices”

A Regional Workshop was organized by the Office of the Deputy Prime-Minister for European Integration and the Ministry of Environment, Mining and Spatial Planning of the Republic of Serbia, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environmental Protection, Physical Planning and Construction of the Republic of Croatia, the Serbian Chamber of Commerce, United Nations Environment Programme and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The Regional Workshop, co-chaired by Serbia and Croatia, provided a forum for environmental policy dialogue and brought together high-level representatives from five SEE countries and representatives of major groups and stakeholders, as well as UN organizations (namely UNEP, UNDP), OSCE and other international entities, to review important and emerging policy issues in the field of the Green Economy and Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP).

The Regional Workshop provided broad policy advice and guidance with the aim of promoting and strengthening regional and international cooperation in the transition to a Green Economy and SCP in a broader context of sustainable development.

Main messages to the Preparatory Process for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

Participants of the Regional Workshop reviewed their achievements and renewed their political commitments to the principles set out in Rio in 1992’ and those defined by the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, 2002.

1. Sustainable Consumption and Production - decoupling economic growth from resource use and environmental degradation - minimizing resource use.

The SEE countries reviewed their achievements and expressed their commitment to work together to make the shift to sustainable consumption and production happen. This also requires endorsement at the highest political level. It was recognized that significant progress had been made on SCP in policy development and initiatives for SCP in the region, since the first SEE regional workshop held in Zagreb in 2005.

There is a general consensus that SCP requires a well structured framework including a life cycle approach in the various sectors. With this regard, the forthcoming 19th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, as well as the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012, present an opportunity to contribute in a significant way to sustainable development through the development of a strong and ambitious framework for action on sustainable consumption and production – the 10 year framework of programmes on SCP. It is expected that 10YFP will contribute to achieving sustainable consumption and production patterns in all countries. South Eastern European countries look forward to playing an active role in the design of this framework at CSD 19, and its subsequent implementation.

A 10YFP will be a strong bridge to RIO+20 and a key milestone in advancing the Green Economy and sustainable development;

The regional workshop indicated that there is a clear need for strengthened cooperation and coordination at regional and national levels in order to achieve a fundamental shift to sustainable consumption and production patterns;

Countries of the region should strengthen and exchange their broad experiences and expertise in supporting the design, development and implementation of sustainable consumption and production approaches, practices and policies, working with a range of stakeholders and in close collaboration with relevant international and regional entities (e.g. UN agencies such as UNEP, UNDP, UN World Tourism Organization, UNESCO and UNIDO, as well as OSCE).

Countries should further elaborate SCP programmes in specific sectors and areas, such as sustainable tourism; agri-food; sustainable buildings and construction; sustainable public procurement; mainstreaming SCP into planning and development strategies; consumer information; education and awareness raising; waste management, transport and cleaner production that is resource efficient. These country programmes should follow structure of 10YFP and should be based on a common vision deriving from Rio and JPOI, contributing to implementation of the MDGs.

The SCP programmes should, in general, be supported through inter alia:

Policy options (vision, function, institutional structure, criteria; and guidelines) for particular programmes;

Participants concluded that countries should build solid and efficient institutional structures, based on existing expertise, using existing structures at all levels of governance, with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders;

- Develop coordination mechanisms at all levels to allow the engagement of all stakeholders; strategic decisions and reviewing progress;
- Create and/or strengthen SCP centres of expertise, and engage existing regional fora, roundtables and networks on SCP in the regions;
- National coordination, through national focal points and inter-ministerial task forces;
- Local level engagement: engage and empower cities as important actors for delivering sustainable development;
- Focus on resource mobilization through a dedicated trust fund for additional and new resources, including voluntary contributions, coupled with the reallocation of existing funds towards SCP;
- Build on current experience and expertise, including UNEP's experience of spreading expert knowledge to a wide base of stakeholders;
- Build stable and solid institutional structures, draw lessons from the Marrakech Process, its regional achievements and task forces.

2. Green Economy - using business to protect the environment

The Green Economy needs to be seen in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and also as one of the means to achieve sustainable development. The transition to a Green Economy can be achieved through (private-public sector) investments and policy measures aimed at improving resource efficiency, development and the implementation of cleaner and low-carbon technologies and markets. A Green Economy can reduce environmental risks, whilst enhancing human well being, fostering green growth and decent job creation.

Countries expressed their serious concerns over growing scarcity and degradation of natural resources which may jeopardize future economic growth and quality life. There is a general consensus that a Green Economy can help address this challenge. A transition to Green Economy should also help to eradicate poverty, given the direct link poverty has to resource degradation. However, it has been clearly stressed that the Green Economy should help in achieving the goals of sustainable development.

SEE countries need to identify priority sectors where such opportunities can be explored through development of policies and initiatives.

During the two-day Regional Workshop, we have witnessed numerous success stories and on-going initiatives where a Green Economy transition is successfully taking place/under-way at the national level. Sharing experiences and examples of good practice provides a solid basis for the countries to learn from the success of others. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge the different national contexts, and that each country may pursue its own pathway towards a Green Economy.

From the lessons learned we can conclude that the transition towards a Green Economy requires strategic policy coordination, technology development and diffusion, technology transfer, capacity building, regional trans-boundary cooperation and additional financial resources, particularly in the case of public sector support to private businesses and industry. Technology development and transfer, including technical assistance, should also include the transfer/sharing of know-how.

Social dialogue, including multistakeholder participation was also discussed as an important element. Besides strong policy support and financial incentives, education, communication and awareness raising - including both consumers and producers (support and promotion of eco-labeling and CSR initiatives are just some examples of positive efforts already being made by various companies), are important elements of the Green Economy transition.

A national strategic approach to the Green Economy should be further elaborated through partnerships between governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector: setting priorities and goals/targets and developing policies and implementation mechanisms. Sustainable consumption and production (including the 10-year Framework of Programmes) should be considered as a crucial element in synergy with the transition to a Green Economy.

Public and private finance and partnerships (PPP) are critical to achieving a Green Economy. In this regard, priority investments should be made in areas that foster natural capital and decouple consumption from economic growth.

In addition, a clear approach to the issue of financing is needed to enable countries to better explore, identify and obtain the necessary financing mechanisms for Green Economy, in particular, investing capital in technology or infrastructure which is often an underlying challenge.

The Regional Workshop identified the issues related to measuring and reporting achievements in the field of the Green Economy. With this regard, the private sector has already taken many measures to contribute towards Green Economy.

Governments should define indicators for measuring and tracking progress reliably. In order to have reliable data, the so called "green criteria" need to be more effectively incorporated into investment decision-making processes and funding programmes. This is where education of civil servants on these subjects can come in useful and can ultimately enable decision makers and their assistants to better understand the policies on which they work, the criteria that have to be met and the best ways to measure the progress made in implementing these policies.

The private sector can support sharing of best practices on reporting between industry sectors and the SEE countries.

Policy and financial measures, as well as the above mentioned indicators, could be presented in the form of national Green Economy strategic plans or roadmaps. Reports on the implementation of these strategic documents should serve to reflect the success, challenges and obstacles to the transition.

Countries expressed a need to further develop capacities for data collection and assessments to measure the progress towards a Green Economy. This would also enable an effective evaluation/measurement of the results achieved.

Countries of the Region should continue to play an active role in developing and operationalizing the Green Economy concept, and in this regard, they may seek the assistance and support of relevant

international entities, such as UN bodies (namely UNEP, UNDP...), OSCE, or regional entities (such as REC, RCC, CEI...).

Countries of the region should also continue to play an active role in the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio + 20), building on the experience, examples of good practice and the knowledge generated from this Regional Workshop and the Green Economy activities.

3. Proposed regional and national actions

Continue or start to transition towards a Green Economy and SCP by:

- developing Green Economy roadmaps with a menu of actions, timelines, actors, tools and sets of targets and a toolbox of best practices; conducting macro-economic analysis to define priority areas for GE;
- scaling up and enhancing education and awareness raising on SCP, GE and sustainable development targeting a wide range of audiences;
- developing regional platforms for exchanging information and experiences in the region on SCP and GE initiatives and activities, and capacity building using IT technologies and web based tools;
- supporting and strengthening the work through existing partnerships and network initiatives, including a Resource Efficient Cleaner Production centre network, an Adriatic-Ionian initiative, a CSR network, etc, highlighting the commitment to SCP/GE;
- conducting SEE regional review study on SCP, possibly in cooperation with UNEP and other partners;
- encouraging companies' voluntary initiatives, such as UN Global Compacts, Corporate and Social Responsibility, ISO, EMAs etc;
- Placing emphasis on the creation of jobs, i.e. Green Jobs (including development of indicators).

Policies

- developing national strategic policies and plans for GE and SCP, in line with the existing strategies, for example, Sustainable Development Strategies, Waste Management Strategies, MDG strategies, EU approximation strategies, low carbon development strategies. For SCP, such policies need to address up-stream, while addressing remaining basic challenges (i.e. waste management);
- strengthening implementation and reshaping the legislative acts;
- setting and redirecting economic incentives (taxes, subsidies etc.);
- introducing SCP and GE principles in public recruitment;
- providing support for companies to invest in GE and SCP areas such as clean technology innovation and diffusion, eco-design, and technology transfer;

Finance

- accessing international financial resources and securing sufficient financial resources at national level (including Climate Change funding i.e. CDM) and setting innovative financing mechanism (i.e. PPP);
- carrying out fiscal innovations and reforms – introduction and reforms of environmental incentives, removal of perverse subsidies;

Institutional arrangement

- better coordination and integration of competencies within competent authorities relevant for the implementation of SCP and GE policies;
- developing and implementing policies and initiatives in partnership with private sectors, civil society, research, academia, Cleaner Production Centres, international organizations, etc;

Possible priority sectors/areas:

- energy: use of renewable energy resources, increase in energy efficiency;
- strengthen waste management and recycling business;
- food/agriculture;
- forestry;
- tourism;
- transport;
- buildings and construction;
- urban and spatial planning and development;
- Ecosystem services (including sustainable management of water resources and forests in accordance with international initiatives such as TEEB etc.);
- Education and awareness raising on sustainable consumption and production and the Green Economy;

Inputs to UNCSD & Rio+20 process

- Convey important regional messages including GE and SCP towards the Rio+20 process at CSD 19 (May 2011), EfE meeting (Sept 2011), UNECE Regional Preparatory meeting (Dec 2011);
- Organize a follow-up multistakeholder regional consultation meeting to further exchange and elaborate views and experiences contributing to Rio+20.