



UNFPA on Sustainable Consumption and Production

The seventh session of the Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals will deal with Sustainable Consumption and Production, among other issues. The Post 2015 discussions have consistently called for a change of the current patterns of consumption and production to slow down the frenetic waste of natural resources, refocus development aspirations on addressing poverty and achieving equality for all and enrich prospects for human dignity and human rights for current and future generations. The Rio Earth Summit (1992), the ICPD (1994) and the Rio+20 (2012) have recognized the critical interrelationships between population dynamics, economic growth, environmental sustainability and equitably development of present and future generations. In this note, UNFPA highlights the population perspective in the Post 2015 dimensions of human rights, equality and environmental sustainability.

♦ **Efforts to reduce poverty, raise living standards, and promote the well-being of a large and growing global population will certainly intensify pressure on the environment and all natural resources**, including land, forests, water and the oceans. However, environmental sustainability is not driven by population size alone but primarily determined by consumption and production patterns.

♦ **Sustainable consumption and production is a global and social justice issue.** Unsustainable consumption and production patterns of the developed and the rich will result in the denial of resources to provide for people's well-being in the poorest areas. Therefore, a change in the patterns of consumption and production of the rich and developed countries is crucial if the global environment is to be protected and replenished. For the developing and poorest countries this is crucial for poverty eradication and the accommodation of people's basic needs.

♦ **A cultural paradigm shift is required.** This paradigm must recognize that development must not be solely based on increasing consumption, and that to bring forward the principles of rights-based development demands not only the pursuit and protection of individual dignity and human rights, but a collective shift towards individual well-being derived from modes of living and livelihoods that have far less impact on the environment. And these must be more equitable to be sustainable.

♦ **Change in consumption begins at the societal level.** One of the most established, effective and just means of change that governments can undertake is to ensure universal access to sustainable and cost-efficient, infrastructures and services i.e. clean water; communication systems; public health system; regulated utilities; and energy efficient public transport systems. These goods and services provide critical means of reducing individual, hence overall consumption while at the same time maximizing dignity and human rights and opportunity for future generations.

🔥 **Individuals also bear responsibility for sustainable consumption.** While those at the bottom end of the income distribution have little or no choice regarding consumption, and indeed consume comparatively little, at higher incomes people have significant choices, and too often choose high consumption. As more and more people recognize the risks of climate change and other human impacts on the environment, incentives for reducing consumption, together with innovations to generate viable means of consuming less without declines in well-being, will help make different choices a reality.

🔥 **Human rights based approaches to sustainable consumption and production will bring improvements in the overall quality of life and well-being and will promote sustainable development.** Gender equality and empowerment of young people will make a world of difference in achieving human well-being and quality of life. Policies that promote these rights to development empower families among other things to decide on the number, timing and spacing of children, reduce fertility levels, and slow population growth.

🔥 **The environmental impacts of production are not restricted to rich countries, but are also significant in the world's least developed countries (LDCs).** While poor countries have contributed least to global greenhouse gas emissions so far, in recent years their economic development model, characterized by a strong dependence on primary commodities, has increased pressures on vital natural resources. LDCs show higher rates of deforestation, are more exposed to droughts and desertification, and are more reliant on marginal agricultural lands than other developing countries. LDCs also present the

highest rates of population growth and high unmet need for contraception.

🔥 **Sustainable, inclusive and equitable production holds the key for global growth, poverty eradication, and shared prosperity.** A central objective of sustainable development strategies, then, must be twofold: (i) to achieve greater progress in human development and well-being which is the ultimate objective of development and growth, and (ii) to significantly reduce environmental impact and thus change the patterns and reduce consumption and production—decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation.

🔥 **Technological progress can contribute to efforts aimed at reconciling economic growth, consumption, and environmental resources.** In this regard, the development of a variety of renewable energy sources and storage technologies to substitute for the use of fossil fuels is a priority.

🔥 **National policies must guarantee the use of clean technology and innovation,** and promote and develop sustainable production and consumption patterns through research and clean technology. Technical cooperation among countries and regions is fundamental to ensure sharing and access to relevant technologies.

To learn more about UNFPA's position and key asks in the post-2015 development agenda, please read UNFPA's position paper "Empowering People to Ensure a Sustainable Future for All"
<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/news/2013/Post%202015%20Position%20Paper.pdf>