



Leadership Dialogue 2: “Life-cycle approaches to resource efficiency, energy, chemicals and waste management”

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Remarks by

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- **Block 1:** Introductory remarks: How do life cycle approaches contribute to resource, energy, chemicals and waste management and who is already benefitting?
- **Block 2:** Scaling up – What experience is there in multiplying the benefits beyond countries’ own remit? Challenges and opportunities

[Block 2 (after first group of Ministers have intervened, the President of ECOSOC is asked the first question of the block): **As President of ECOSOC, how do you see life-cycle approaches being considered in the reviews of SDGs at the HLPF?**]

(3-4 minutes)

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to be here with such distinguished group of speakers, discussing these important topics. I would like to give you my views, as President of ECOSOC, on how these discussions can feed into the High-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) and help countries in the implementation of their national development strategies and advancing the 2030 Agenda.

The process of follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda involves several layers of preparations and reviews at the national, regional and global levels, culminating at the HLPF, where countries and other stakeholders come together to carry out thematic reviews, on the theme of the HLPF; reviews of implementation of specific SDGs, and the voluntary national reviews (VNRs). The Forum thus provides a powerful feedback mechanism with high potential for multiplier effects on countries’ national implementation strategies, by providing the space for countries to share knowledge and then bring lessons learned, experiences and solutions back to their countries, try them out, and adapt them to their own situations, in their efforts to implement their national plans and policies. The results can then be fed back again into the

virtuous cycle through the countries' VNR presentations at the HLPF, where the best practices will once again be shared for other countries' benefit.

Let me illustrate with the reviews of SDG 7, on affordable and clean energy, and SDG 11, on sustainable cities and communities, which were under review last year and closely relate to our discussions today.

[SDG 7]

The review of SDG 7 at the HLPF provided a mixed picture of implementation. Although the global population with access to electricity increased from 78 per cent to 87 per cent between 2000 and 2016, around one billion people still lack access, and only 44.8 per cent of people in LDCs currently have access to electricity. Access rates to electricity in rural areas at 76 per cent are much lower than in urban areas at 97 per cent. Furthermore, while renewable energy power generation such as solar and wind expanded dramatically, more progress is needed in transport, cooling and heating sectors. Energy efficiency is improving steadily; yet, it needs to improve 2.7 per cent per year until 2030 if it is to double the global rate of energy efficiency. I am hopeful that we are moving fast ahead in identifying ways to meet our energy needs while limiting greenhouse gas emissions.

Indeed, the good news is that advances in technologies, rapid cost reductions, strategic shifts in policies, new business models and a growing number of best practices are accelerating the transformation of the energy systems in many places and bringing SDG 7 within reach. If deliberate action is taken to seize these opportunities and channel them to reach those furthest behind, it is still possible to achieve SDG 7 by 2030.

This deliberate action, nevertheless, goes beyond political will. It requires that we, as a society, as individuals, understand the need to change the way we make decisions. Our decisions as consumers, investors, citizens, neighbours. To achieve sustainable and resilient societies, we need to be aware of the impact of our decisions and take those that lead to sustainable outcomes. This entails proper evaluation of all dimensions of sustainability – the economic, the social and the environmental. This is the required change in mindset; this is the new paradigm.

Taking a life cycle approach can help us understand better how to realize SDG 7. We can ensure energy efficiency by acting at the various stages of energy production, starting with the extraction of natural resources. But we should take the same life cycle approach to determine how we can improve access to energy and enhance the benefits of energy for the poorest and most vulnerable at every step in the process. Energy efficiency and energy access are two key components of SDG 7 and must be pursued together.

While pursuing a life cycle approach, we must also be mindful of the interlinkages among the SDGs. Energy is a key aspect of the life-cycle of many products. Obviously, we will succeed on SDG 7 only if we adopt adequate policies in the multiple areas that impact on or are impacted by energy.

[Interlinkages]

When we have sustainability-based decision-making, interlinkages are intrinsically taken into account and integration is done by default. If we focus on the synergies between the Goals, we can identify the policies and measures that will have cross-cutting, multiplier effects across the Goals. In addition, importantly, if we understand and address the trade-offs between the Goals, we can ensure that our policies do not push for the advancement of one Goal in detriment of others.

[SDG 11]

Let us take cities as another example. Cities' density and economies of agglomeration act as strings that connect all SDGs together, linking economy, energy, environment, science, technology and social and economic outcomes. Urban waste management is strongly associated to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene; energy systems are critical for the development of safe, resilient and sustainable human settlements.

The efficient management of natural resources, safe disposal and treatment of toxic waste and pollutants can contribute to health, as well as responsible consumption and production. The proper management of waste generated by cities has direct implications on the pollution of oceans and the degradation of natural habitats and the loss of biodiversity largely depends on the way cities are managed. Working towards environmentally sustainable and resilient urban development, including through life cycle approaches, creates many opportunities towards developing mitigation and adaptation strategies to address climate change. Understanding the urban dimension of the different sustainable development goals is key to unlocking their full potential.

While focusing on the life cycle approach, we must not lose sight of the broader picture and social dimension. Inclusive and productive cities are important for entrepreneurship and job creation. Intra-city and spatial inequalities are fundamental for understanding and addressing the goal on inequalities.

Therefore, promoting a comprehensive and integrated approach to city development and management is of crucial importance. The same applies to all SDGs.

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[Other two experts are asked, and then second group of Ministers intervene. Just before the wrap up by the Moderator, he asks the President of ECOSOC (and only her) for a 1-2 minute view on: **Having heard of the views from the experts, and the interventions from Ministers, as President of ECOSOC how do you see life-cycle approaches can be further scaled up in the reviews of SDGs 8 and 13, to be reviewed later this year at the HLPF?]**

(1-2 minutes)

The review of SDG 8, on decent work and economic growth, and SDG 13, on climate action, are of particular importance for the topic of our discussion here today. Target 8.4 is of particular importance because it intends to increase efforts to de-couple economic growth from resource consumption and environmental degradation through the efficient use of resources and by minimizing pollution - with developed countries taking the lead.

The latest data on indicators 8.4.1, on the material footprint¹, and 8.4.2, on domestic footprints, shows that the per capita material footprint of developing countries grew from 5 metric tons in 2000 to 9 metric tons in 2017, representing a significant improvement in the material standard of living. Most of the increase is attributed to a rise in the use of non-metallic minerals, pointing to growth in the areas of infrastructure and construction. While an increase in the material footprint is required in developing countries to enhance the living standards of growing populations, it is important to minimize the reliance on such materials and increase their recycling to reduce environmental pressure and impact.

At the same time, for all types of material, developed countries have at least double the per capita footprint of developing countries. In particular, the material footprint for fossil fuels is more than four times higher for developed than developing countries. Because fossil fuels directly impact the environment in various ways, the need to decouple their use from economic growth is key to achieving sustainable consumption and production.

Climate change has an impact on all SDGs. No SDG can be achieved if we let climate change endanger our planet and future generations. And, vice versa, advances on all other SDGs – from poverty eradication to gender equality sustainable consumption and production patterns or sustainable terrestrial ecosystems – will contribute to halting climate change.

The Secretary-General has said it: “Climate change is the most pressing challenge of our times”. Coming from a Small Island Developing State, I am very aware how climate change exacerbates existing vulnerabilities and creates additional significant challenges for all, albeit perhaps immediately felt in SIDS and coastal areas in several other countries. It is important to tackle this challenge now, before we run out of time.

¹ The “material footprint” of an economy refers to the total amount of raw materials extracted globally---across the entire supply chain---to meet that economy’s final consumption demand. People rely on such materials to meet basic needs---for food, clothing, water, shelter, infrastructure and many other aspects of life.

Greening and “climate-proofing” the economy will involve large-scale investments in new technologies, equipment, buildings and infrastructure and will have significant impacts on the world of work.

This is not an impossible dream; nor it entails a gloomy period of regress. If we are able to rethink the way we consume and produce in light of sustainability criteria, taking into consideration all its dimensions, major opportunities will arise for job creation and skills development, improvements in job quality and incomes, as well as advances in equity and social inclusion. These benefits are nevertheless not automatic; rather, they are contingent on the right actions and policies being implemented. The life-cycle approach is an important part of the solutions we need to implement them.

This is where the HLPF comes in – and your contributions are very welcome. Preparations for the reviews are well underway. I will be participating at the Global Conference on synergies between climate action and SDG implementation organized by DESA and UNFCCC on 1-3 April at Copenhagen in preparation for the review of SDG 13. ILO is organizing an expert Group meeting on SDG 8 on 3-5 April in Geneva in order to take stock of where we are; to share knowledge and success stories; and to suggest ways forward in terms of policies and partnerships. This will help inform the HLPF and influence collaboration and programmes going forward.

Delivering on the most successful HLPF next year is my top priority to complete its first cycle. I am confident that the HLPF will produce new thinking and renewed commitment on advancing life-cycle approaches to achieve sustainable development and combat climate change.

Thank you.