

UN Environment Promotes Sustainable Consumption and Production

By: UN Environment



Introduction

The sustainable consumption and production is a standalone goal in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, but also impacts on other goals such as climate change, poverty, zero hunger, and sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth – UN environment focuses on three areas:

1. Supporting countries in creating and enabling policy environment that promotes resource efficiency, sustainable consumption and production and the transition to green economy pathways
2. Enhancing the ability of governments, businesses and other parties to adopt sustainable consumption and production practices in key sectors across global supply chains.
3. Enhancing the ability of countries, businesses, civil society and individual consumers to make informed choices for sustainable consumption and lifestyles.

UN Environment supports countries and regions to integrate sustainable consumption and production approaches into policies. Over the last two years, with UN Environment support, eight countries and nine cities developed and/or started implementing sustainable consumption and production. This brings the total to 29 countries and nine cities that have adopted or started the implementation of sustainable consumption and production and green economy pathways since 2011.

Moreover, UN Environment aims to provide enabling conditions for promoting more sustainable consumption choices and lifestyles. Progress is demonstrated by the number of public and private sector institutions that put in place policies and measures conducive to sustainable consumption patterns. Supporting sustainable public procurement is one way to stimulate demand for, and supply of, sustainable products. Over the last two years, UN Environment supported 20 countries on sustainable public procurement. Six of these countries are developing or implementing action plans in close coordination with the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10YFP), which is running programmes on Consumer Information, Sustainable Lifestyles and Education, Sustainable Public Procurement, Sustainable Buildings and Construction, Sustainable Food Systems, and Sustainable Tourism. Additionally, with UNEP's support, 27 companies –based in Brazil, Cameroon, Colombia, India, Peru and Uganda – have increasingly used life cycle-based approaches and tools.

Education and awareness-raising are also important enabling conditions for more sustainable lifestyles. Over the last two years, UN Environment supported activities that catalyzed the engagement of 18 stakeholders into the promotion of sustainable lifestyles – including through the joint UNEP/Food and Agriculture Organization initiative on reducing food waste, Think.Eat.Save – bringing the total to 28 stakeholders.

Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Area of Transportation

As the 3rd session of the United Nations Environment Assembly is fast approaching (4 - 6 December), discussions arise on the best practices to reduce pollution in its various forms –which is the theme of this year's meeting,

Over the last years, many cities in the region have been reexamining current transportation systems to determine how to accommodate a growing and socioeconomically diverse population, while seeking to minimize environmental pollution and urban congestion.

As already known to most of us, the transport sector is responsible for approximately one quarter of all energy related greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions. This is a percentage that can and must be reduced to provide for the future we want for our generation and our children's, thus we need policies, practices, technology as well as an attitude and a lifestyle supporting transformation to sustainable transport.

Transport is only sustainable when it provides for safe, economically viable and socially acceptable access to people, places, goods and services while meeting generally accepted objectives for health and environmental quality, protecting eco systems and minimizing adverse impact on global phenomena such as climate change, stratospheric ozone depletion and the spread of persistent organic pollutants.

There is often a large gap between the technology available and best practice know-how, the networks necessary to build consensus and the actual implementation of transformative change.

Sustainable development is the balance between the three strands of development, be it economic, social or environment. However, in many countries and cities in developing countries that used to have a high share of public transport and non-motorized modes in urban areas, are losing their shares because of their inability to cope with the demand for transport in particular with economic and population growth.

The challenge is to sustain the high modal share by continuously improving the existing systems.

The challenges for the transport sector in becoming “green” are made obvious by observing current trends, whereby the global vehicle fleet is expected to triple by 2050 and most of the growth will occur in developing and transition countries that have immature vehicle emission reduction strategies and increasing private transport practices.

Technological improvements such as fuel-efficient vehicles and alternative power sources have not been rapid enough to offset the impacts of this growth. These trends translate directly into various costs for the environment, society and economy: including Energy consumption and greenhouse gas Emissions, Congestion and associated losses in productivity of urban areas, Resource depletion, Degradation of human health, Reduction in human safety, and Loss of biodiversity.

The United Nations Environment promotes Policies for greening transport that follows three interlinked principles:

1. Avoiding or reducing trips through integration of land use and transportation planning, and localized production and consumption. Not only this contributes to reducing environmental impacts, but also increases socio-economic benefits for local communities.
2. Shifting to more environmentally efficient modes such as public and non-motorized transport for passengers and to rail and water transport for freight.
3. Improving vehicle and fuel technology to reduce the negative social and environmental effects from each kilometer travelled.

Other policies are also required which promote compact or mass transit corridor-based cities, the regulation of fuel and vehicles, and the provision of information to aid decisions by consumers and industry.

The overall benefits of transport sector to human wellbeing can be achieved with the provision of right

and innovative technological options and investments on infrastructure, complemented by appropriate policies and regulatory framework. An efficient and clean public transport system has low specific energy consumption and emission per passenger or goods per kilometer travelled or transported. Public transport (buses, light rail, metros, and trains) uses less space for transporting goods and services as opposed to private vehicles. More importantly, public transport provides equitable transport services to a large segment of the population especially the underserved population.

Strong economic incentives such as taxes, charges and subsidy reform can also support an increase in cleaner private vehicles as well as a shift to public and non-motorized transport. Technology and practices innovations can also provide better socio-economic development while enhancing sustainable transport practices. Taxes should not mean more hardship on unprivileged sectors of the society as that should be integrated into sustainable transport and poverty reduction strategies resulting in a comprehensive, inclusive and equitable sustainability options.

Enabling conditions are necessary conditions in the investment and political environment that collectively allow the transition to a green economy. These enablers will assist the implementation of the green investments for the transport sector that facilitate best available policies and technologies across the world. Key enabling conditions for green transport include:

- Designing appropriate regulation, planning and information systems.
- Setting the right financial conditions and economic Incentives.
- Ensuring technology transfer and access; and
- Strengthening institutions and capacity.

Transport is a major attractor of public and private investment through strong prevalence of public-sector funding for Transport infrastructure and strong preference by international donors and national governments for the roads sector.

To enact green transport, it is clear that financing patterns must be reformed, so that adequate funding is provided for green transport in all aspects including technology, capacity-building, operation, and infrastructure. And Resources would be shifted from supporting non-sustainable forms of transport towards green transport.

There are many revenue-generating opportunities for the private sector to support or complement sustainable transportation systems and operations. These may take the form of public-private partnerships, or a for-profit business providing a service or product directly to users such as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) systems.

UNEP has four global flagship programmes that are founded on the 'avoid-shift-improve' approach;

1. Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles (PCFV) - providing a range of technical, financial and networking support for governments of developing and transitional countries and other stakeholders to lower vehicle emissions to promote cleaner fuels and cleaner, more efficient vehicles
2. The Global Fuel Economy Initiative - promoting debate and discussion around the issue of fuel economy. The initiative promotes data analysis of fuel economy potentials, support for national and regional policy-making and outreach and awareness raising to stakeholders.
3. Share the Road - A UNEP-led initiative that advocates a systematic inclusion on Non Motorised Transport infrastructure in urban road investments as a matter of policy.
4. Public Transport - Improvements in the public transport sector provide the largest opportunity for avoiding future transport emissions and an optimal development pathway for the transport sector.

Other initiatives include The Green Passport which aims to introduce travelers to some practices to minimize their footprint by choosing the least polluting form of transport. The UNEP Carbon Calculator which informs travelers or commuters how much is the eco- footprint their choice of mode of transport would be contributing.

Municipalities across the world have employed a range of instruments and policies to enhance the efficiency of their transportation systems and improve their quality of life.

- In central London, for example, a "congestion charge" reduced CO2 emissions by 20%.
- Singapore's Electronic Road Pricing and Vehicle Quota System slowed increasing car use and motorization.
- Bogota's bus rapid transit system (BRT) is contributing to a 14% drop in emissions per passenger, replicated across the globe in Lagos, Ahmadabad, Guangzhou and Johannesburg.
- In Europe, Emissions standards and car-sharing schemes have reduced car dependency.
- In the Gulf, a "GCC Railway Authority" is expected to be formed to oversee the overall implementation of the GCC Railway Project
- The underground metro in Cairo is the major public transport project in the region. A 63 km underground network links the three governorates which form the Cairo metropolitan region,
- The high speed railway in Saudi Arabia connect Mecca, Al-Madina and Jeddah