

Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations

Written Comments

Round Table on Sustainable Consumption and Production 19th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development May 12, 2011

Advancing more sustainable patterns of consumption and production is not an unfamiliar challenge for Israel. Given our scarce natural resources, promoting sustainable consumption and production has long been an imperative in our country—and Israelis have become well acquainted with the challenge of doing more with less. We remain ready to share our expertise in this area with others.

It is clear that this effort will require us to make changes at both ends of the economic cycle, enabling the transition to a circular economy. Moving toward sustainable consumption and production means decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation through technological innovation, eco-efficiency, and advances in information and communications technology.

At the same time, we must foster behavioral change in consumption patterns, which will be essential for building a circular economy. These efforts and policies should take into account the human characteristics and social motivational forces that lead to behavioral changes, leveraging these forces to promote more sustainable lifestyle choices.

We recently launched a major, government-led green lifestyle campaign that uses traditional marketing tools to communicate the need to reduce consumption. This campaign – which will be featured in a working breakfast that Israel is hosting on May 13th – uses clear messages and offers simple advice to the Israeli public about day-to-day activities that can promote more sustainable consumption patterns and save money.

We are also implementing a government decision that aims to set an example in the public sector for adopting sustainable practices by setting measurable targets for reducing the consumption of paper, electricity, water, and bottles. The decision also calls on public agencies to give preference to low-pollution, low-fuel consumption vehicles in government tenders, reinforcing an earlier government decision to promote green procurement.

At the same time that we seek to green our government, Israel is undertaking major efforts to green our schools, from kindergartens to universities. These initiatives are not limited to environmental studies programs. They include concrete actions — such

as conserving resources and minimizing waste — which improve the environment and the surrounding community.

Sustainable consumption and production remain a top priority. However, we must not forget that reducing consumption or production levels is not a goal in itself, but rather a means to an end. At present, the lack of data makes it difficult to determine whether consumption or production patterns are sustainable. Therefore, the shift toward sustainable production and consumption should be accompanied by the development of indicators other than GDP to measure the full environmental and social impacts of economic growth. Supplementary indicators are especially crucial for states in transition and emerging markets where environmental and economic decoupling is a major challenge as a result of population and economic growth.

Israel looks forward to a continued exchange of ideas and best practices on programs and frameworks to accelerate the shift toward sustainable consumption and production.