

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to welcome you here in Brussels to the opening session of this year's Green Week. It is a particular pleasure to welcome to this session Dr Klaus Töpfer, Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme, and Dr Ashok Khosla, President of Development Alternatives from India.

Sustainable consumption and production is our topic today. Thanks to the European Union, a commitment on sustainable consumption and production was included in the Johannesburg Implementation Plan last September. Now it is time to move from words to deeds in this area, too.

Sustainable consumption and production is indeed a huge challenge and an urgent necessity. Let me illustrate this: If China with its population of 1.3 billion had the same rate of private car ownership as the US, the oil currently produced in the world would not be enough to produce and run these cars.

Current Western-style patterns of consumption and production are not sustainable. It also shows that industrialised countries have to take the lead in moving towards sustainable consumption and production patterns.

At the same time, we must recognise that sustainable consumption and production is a relatively new concept. But we should not lose time in conceptual debates. The challenge this week is to show how we will turn this Johannesburg commitment into practical action.

- I will now say a bit more about where we want to get to on sustainable consumption and production; and,
- then discuss briefly what mechanisms and instruments we can use, and which initiatives already exist in the EU.

Our objective this week must be to map out the way ahead in this area.

## **So, what do we want?**

To provide welfare today and tomorrow, we need growth - but it needs to be sustainable. The world's resources will be enough to satisfy the needs for everyone even in fifty years time, if we learn to use them differently – more efficiently, more equally. We have to cut the link between economic growth and environmental degradation and depletion of natural resources.

In this context, it is appropriate that the slogan of our Green Week is “Changing our behaviour.” Reaching sustainable patterns of consumption and production will require a change of behaviour. We have to liberate ourselves from well-established thinking and behavioural patterns, look differently at how we are consuming and producing, identify key measures. Our aim need not be to consume and produce less, but rather to consume and produce differently and better – to make more from less.

While putting our own house in order, we also need to make sure that our ways of producing and consuming do not constrain the room for sustainable development in developing countries. I am sure Dr Khosla will elaborate on this.

It is in our own interest that developing countries benefit from the promotion of sustainable consumption and production and technological innovations in our part of the world – and that they are able to leapfrog directly to more sustainable and environmentally sound solutions.

As of now, sustainable consumption and production remains a broad vision. We need to flesh it out to be able to determine how we can achieve it. I am looking forward to hearing your ideas and suggestions.

## **Now let us consider which mechanisms and instruments we can use.**

The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation calls for the development of, I quote, “*a 10-year framework of programmes in support of regional and national initiatives to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production patterns that*

*will promote social and economic development within the carrying capacity of ecosystems.” Quote ends.*

The EU has been eager to have sustainable consumption and production tackled early on in the work programme of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, which is in charge of operationalising the Johannesburg Implementation Plan. Unfortunately, when the CSD recently met, it was decided that this issue will only be discussed during the 4<sup>th</sup> cycle of the new work programme, that is in 2010/2011.

This is clearly disappointing. But it must not mean that momentum is lost. Individual countries and regions should continue to work on their own national programmes, so that by 2010, we should be able to demonstrate tangible progress. We cannot afford to wait until 2010. We have to start to work now.

UNEP clearly has a key role in the international work on sustainable consumption and production – and this is why I am especially happy to see Mr Töpfer here today. UNEP’s work on cleaner production and sustainable consumption has been impressive, paving the way for its leadership in developing the international 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production, together with other relevant UN organisations and key players. We look forward to co-operation with UNEP in this important work, as we are willing to share our expertise and experiences with partners all over the world.

As one of the world’s major markets, the EU takes its global responsibility seriously. At the European Council in March, EU heads of state and government identified the development of sustainable consumption and production programmes both internationally and at the EU level as one of the key priorities of the EU’s Sustainable Development Strategy.

### **What has the EU done so far?**

Quite some work has already been done to promote sustainable consumption and production in the EU. There is however no single, explicit Sustainable Consumption and Production Policy or programme in place. Instead, several different policies

contribute to sustainable consumption and production, through both horizontal and sectoral policies.

The results of our efforts have so far been mixed. Innovation and technology have enabled significant improvements in the efficiency with which many resources are used, producing social and environmental benefits. But these benefits have often been offset by growing volumes of production and consumption, for example in areas such as transport and waste.

With regard to production and products, existing environmental policies have until now tended to focus on large point sources of pollution, such as emissions and waste.

Right now however, we are broadening our approach. We are moving towards reducing the negative environmental impacts of products and services across their life cycles and at points of pollution other than just the manufacturing and end of life stages. To put it differently: We are moving towards tackling diffuse sources of pollution and reducing the environmental impact of resources use. This is essential if we are to reach sustainable patterns of consumption and production.

Allow me to mention a few examples: Later this month, the Commission is due to adopt its strategy for implementing IPP- Integrated Product Policy. IPP advocates life cycle thinking, which means that when environmental measures are considered, the whole of a product's life cycle will be taken into account, from the extraction of natural resources, through their design, manufacture, assembly, marketing, distribution, sale and use, to their disposal as waste. In other words: from cradle to grave...or cradle to cradle.

In the field of waste management, we are going to put stronger emphasis on waste prevention to save resources. Think about this: When we throw a product away, it does not only represent a piece of waste, but also all the resources used to produce it. Thus the real weight of a toothbrush is 1.5kg, and that of a mobile phone 75kg. We also plan to improve the efficiency of recycling, and have just launched a consultation process on waste prevention and recycling.

We are also working on a strategy on the sustainable use of natural resources. A Communication outlining the main features of this strategy and proposing the first concrete steps towards it is due to be adopted before the summer break.

There are other ongoing initiatives that will help us deliver sustainable consumption and production, such as fostering the development of environmentally sound technologies and encouraging green public procurement.

Public spending on goods and services in the EU is equivalent to 16% of EU GDP. If public authorities start to prioritise green products and services in their contracting, this will make a huge impact.

As you can see, there is indeed a number of policies that go in the direction of sustainable consumption and production.

**The question is: How much more do we need to do and with which tools?**

As I mentioned earlier, we need to clearly define the scope of our commitment to sustainable consumption and production. But this must not remain at the level of conceptual debate. We then need to analyse the existing policy instruments. Is there need for improvement? Is a more coherent and easily identifiable EU sustainable consumption and production policy necessary? What can and what should the EU realistically do?

One thing is clear: sustainable consumption and production requires a mix of different instruments at different levels – regulatory frameworks, voluntary measures and economic instruments. We also need the contribution of all stakeholders – national governments, local authorities, business and industry, scientific community, and non-governmental organisations. And we must consider how the different policies and instruments can best complement and enhance each other.

I am confident that moving the global economy onto a more socially responsible and resource effective path will offer benefits to the society, the environment and

economy in all countries. The EU can and should become a model for a new eco-efficient society.

It is time to roll up our sleeves and start to make progression the 10-year framework of programmes to accelerate the shift to sustainable consumption and production patterns. Green Week should provide a useful workshop to take this forward and your contribution is eagerly waited.

And now, I am looking forward to the presentations of Dr Töpfer and Dr Khosla.

Thank you.