

**ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE
ENVIRONMENT POLICY COMMITTEE**

Working Group on Waste Prevention and Recycling

**CHAIR'S SUMMARY OF THE 2nd OECD WORKSHOP ON SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS
MANAGEMENT (SMM)**

**11th Meeting of the WGWPR
Tel Aviv, Israel
10-11 April 2008**

Dr. Miriam Haran, Chair of the 2nd SMM Workshop, presented a draft version of this summary under Agenda Item 6 at the 11th meeting of the WGWPR for discussion and agreement. Delegates provided comments which have been incorporated into this version of the Chair's Summary. The Working Group also decided that this document will be put on the password protected website as a "For Official Use" document.

Contact Henrik Harjula; Tel: +33 1 45 24 98 18; Fax: + 33 1 44 30 61 79;
Email: henrik.harjula@oecd.org

JT03245695



CHAIR'S SUMMARY OF THE 2ND OECD WORKSHOP ON SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS MANAGEMENT (SMM)

Introduction

For the last 25 years the OECD has been developing and promoting international policies aimed at minimising waste generation and managing the residues in an environmentally sound manner. It has become evident that waste minimisation policies which address only end-of-life products and materials are not effective in reducing waste generation associated with increasing economic activity and material consumption. This accentuates the need for creative and far-sighted solutions, using life-cycle thinking to reduce the negative environmental impacts of materials and products in a cost-effective manner.

As a response, the OECD has introduced work on Sustainable Materials Management (SMM), having emphasis on integrated material, product and waste policies and addressing environmental impacts over the whole life-cycle of materials and products.

This work started in 2005 with a workshop which explored current understanding and status of activities aiming at sustainable materials management in OECD countries, developed a working definition for SMM and determined the most pressing areas for future work.

The objectives of this second SMM Workshop were to take stock of existing initiatives taken by business, OECD and non-OECD countries, international organizations and NGO's that are related to SMM, identify possible barriers and challenges when developing SMM strategies and policies and explore what role the OECD could play in supporting this process.

Front runners' experience on SMM

Since the first OECD Workshop on SMM in 2005, the SMM concept has evolved rapidly in many OECD countries. A much clearer understanding of what SMM means is emerging, including what types of activities/elements are covered by this concept. The following major steps have been experienced:

- In general, there are a lot of existing SMM-related initiatives at all levels of government, industry and international organisations, some at conceptual level (*e.g.*, gathering information, developing methodologies, designing possible strategies) and others in concrete actions;
- SMM, life-cycle concept and shift of paradigm (from cradle-to-grave to cradle-to-cradle) are becoming better embedded, directly or indirectly, in the way of thinking at all levels (government, international organisations, private sector and NGOs);
- There is a shift towards how we can use materials, including waste, in the most sustainable way in our economies, taking into account economic efficiency and social equity but also looking at upstream, such as sustainable chemistry, design for environment and underlying production and consumption patterns (sustainable materials management would be very difficult without sustainable materials).

Challenges ahead

Although much evolvement has taken place among front-runners since the first Workshop in 2005, SMM is still at the beginning of a challenging transition. Many OECD and many more non-OECD countries, as well as the majority of small and medium-sized enterprises have not yet given any thought to SMM. Some identified challenges include:

- Complexity and broadness of SMM concept;
- Which strategic directions should be taken (*e.g.* eco-efficiency or eco-effectiveness)? What is sustainable?
- Time lag: how can public policy makers react in a timely manner to fast changing and complex global markets and specific situations;
- Integration, at several levels of government (coherent policy measures and strategies);
- Build and strengthen cooperation and/or partnership with producers, consumers, NGOs;
- The SMM concept needs to be translated into concrete actions, covering the entire life-cycle and supply chain of materials and products in a globalised world;
- However, information transfer through life-cycles and supply chains of materials and products is challenging;
- Business needs clear and simple targets and indicators, as well as simpler models and cost-effective tools (measure not only what is “easy” but what is “needed”);
- Incorporation of social aspects and underlying consumer paradigms;
- Dissemination of good practices.

A way forward

Identified opportunities include:

- Raise awareness and share knowledge to translate SMM paradigm into understandable policy messages;
- Increase integration and co-operation between different actors throughout the life-cycle (governments, business, NGOs, consumers, etc.);
- Analyse benefits (economic and environmental) of actions;
- Promote development of sustainable materials (*e.g.* biomaterials) and work towards closed material cycles;
- Continue promoting recycling activities;
- Carry out case studies in industrial sectors and OECD countries;
- Review and develop indicators for SMM;
- Organise another SMM workshop to look at the impact of emerging legislation and activities on international SMM policy formulation engaging a wide audience, including OECD and non-OECD countries, other OECD bodies, other international organisations, NGOs, academia, etc.