

Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Context of Circular Economy and Climate Agenda

Panel Discussion

The Sustainable Development Goal-12 ‘Sustainable Consumption and Production’ (SCP) calls upon producers (governments and businesses) and consumers to ensure that production and consumption are environmentally sustainable and beneficial. Extractive and unsustainable exploitation of natural resources either due to population explosion or corporate greed and unsustainable agriculture and industrial production in terms of their excessive carbon footprint deplete and degrade the environment and its sustainability. Amid unsustainable consumption and production, there is a need to take tangible actions to restore ecosystems to replenish nature and its resources and to promote a sustainable consumption and production mechanism in the region.

In 1982, South Asian governments jointly formed the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) as an inter-governmental organisation to promote and support protection and management of the environment in the region. Member States include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. SACEP promotes regional cooperation on the environment in the context of sustainable development and on economic and social development issues that influence it. The Programme collaborates with various national, regional, and international entities, both governmental and non-governmental, and aligns with experts and groups dedicated to such cooperative and conservation initiatives.

One of the most diverse regions in the world, South Asia is bordered in the north by the Himalayas and down in the south by the Indian Ocean. It has a diversity of ecosystems from lush green tropical forests to harsh, dry, and sandy deserts. It is also one of the most populous regions with a rich share of diverse languages, religions, and outlooks across the subcontinent alone. South Asian nations share many similar environmental problems, stemming from poverty and its consequences on natural resources. Over the past decade, South Asia’s aspirations for economic growth have resulted in heightened production, subsequently exerting greater strain on its natural resources and the environment. In fact, there is significant concern regarding natural resources of the region, including but not limited to, depletion of water quality and quantity; loss of biodiversity; dwindling forests and coastal resources (e.g., loss of mangroves); and soil degradation resulting from nutrient depletion and salinisation.

In response to these concerns, many countries have taken action on the local and regional level. They have also started collaborating via various multilateral agreements on environmental management and protection for mitigation of transboundary and other shared issues. A major development in this regard has been the ‘[Malé Declaration](#)’ on prevention and control of air pollution and its transboundary effects which promotes intergovernmental cooperation to tackle this cross-boundary issue.

SACEP also assists national governments in their development and environmental initiatives by executing various programmes and projects. The Forum has eight major Programmes, including the Post-2015 South Asia Development Agenda; Biodiversity Conservation; Sustainable Consumption and Production; Waste Management; Climate Change; South Asian Seas Programme (SASP); Plastic Free Rivers and Seas for

South Asia Project; and Sustainable Nitrogen Management. Each of these programmes have various projects under their umbrella.

The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), in collaboration with UNEP Asia and the Pacific (as part of the Switch Asia project), recently undertook a comprehensive study examining Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) patterns across all SACEP member countries. SCP, also referred to as SDG12, emphasises transitioning from detrimental consumption and production habits. This shift is pivotal not only for minimising ecological footprints but also for championing human well-being and prosperity. The ethos of SCP is deeply intertwined with the discourse on the circular economy and the broader climate agenda.

Given the intricate nature of each country's political economy and the absence of a uniform approach to monitor and report on SCP, SDPI is partnering with the Climate Action Network South Asia (CANSA) to host this panel discussion which will address the following key questions:

1. Can a single set of indicators be universally applicable for all countries? If not, what approaches might be suitable for the policy integration of SCP, given each country's unique policy framework on implementation, monitoring, and reporting?
2. What best practices or programmes on SCP have been adopted by the SACEP countries?
3. Given the various limitations and differing approaches, how can the SACEP countries integrate the SCP policy framework effectively?
4. How can SACEP countries mainstream SCP in their planning processes to achieve the objectives of SDG 12, especially in the context of the circular economy and climate agenda discussions?

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