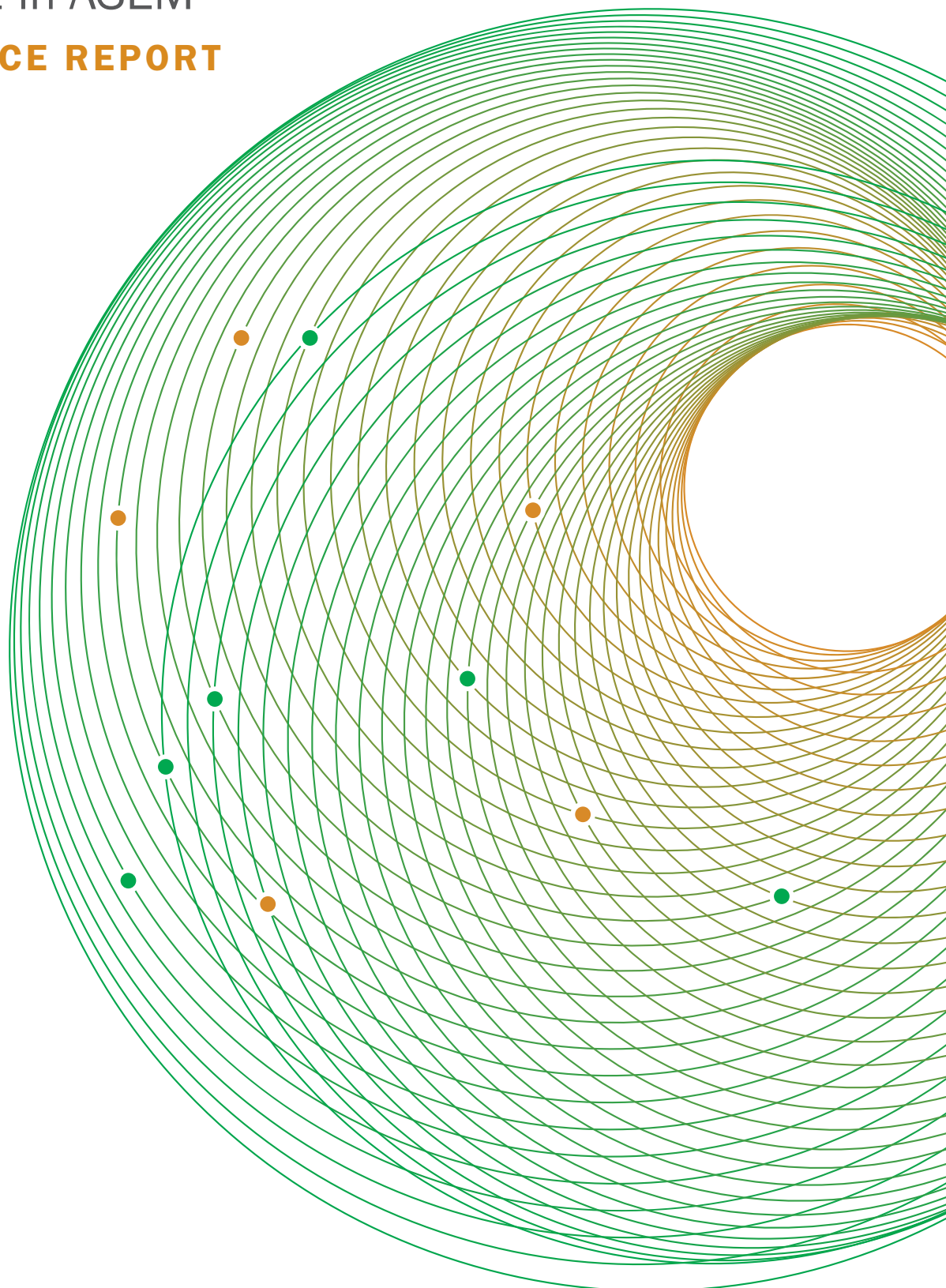




Connecting The Dots:
Creating an Enabling Environment
for SDG12 in ASEM

CONFERENCE REPORT



About Asia-Europe Environment Forum (ENVforum)

Established in 2003, the Asia-Europe Environment Forum (ENVforum) is a partnership of: Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), Government of Sweden through the Strategic Collaborative Fund administered by Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF), ASEM SMEs Eco-Innovation Center (ASEIC) and the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES).

Since its inception 17 years ago, the ENVforum has organised over 80 high-level international meetings, roundtables, conferences and workshops, bringing together over 2,000 selected participants from civil society, NGOs, academia, governments, international organisations, and the private sector. The ENVforum has produced over 14 publications addressing essential issues related to sustainable development and climate change

Acting as both facilitator and bottom-up promoter of wide-ranging initiatives, ENVforum provides an inter-regional platform for knowledge-sharing and capacity building for policy makers, businesses and civil society from Asia and Europe on sustainable development. The aim is to contribute to the formulation of sound decisions across all sectors that are mindful of their environmental, social, and economic impacts and ultimately of generations to come.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Today, the aims of the ENVforum are reflected in the 2030 Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Since 2013, the ENVforum has been actively engaged in the global discussion surrounding the SDGs, which were adopted by the UN Member States in the UN Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015. The ENVforum was given its mandate by the ASEM Summit in Vientiane, Lao PDR in November 2012. Going beyond its traditional format, the ENVforum launched a program to contribute to the bottom-up process that supports the implementation and monitoring of SDGs by providing Asian and European countries with key insights into sustainable development planning. The program is based on three pillars:

1.

It undertakes research on SDGs and their associated indicators, and climate change

2.

It organises knowledge-hub meetings of experts working on SDGs and indicators as well as on the Green Economy and climate change

3.

It disseminates the outcomes of its research and consultations to policymakers, civil society members and businesses

Multi-stakeholder cooperation between international organisations, governments, businesses and the civil society will be required to address a variety of implementation challenges to translate the SDGs into reality. The ENVforum provides a platform for such multi-stakeholder cooperation to take place and supports global discussions with insights gained from its research on SDGs and climate change.

Introduction

Background

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) outlined in “Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” presents multiple challenges for countries to implement SDGs. One of the central issues impeding the success of the 2030 Agenda is unsustainable consumption and production pattern.

Consumption and production are the building blocks of the economy, and thus essential to economic growth and development. However, with the projected world population to reach 9.8 billion by 2050, current consumption and production pattern is detrimental to our environment. At this rate, the magnitude of natural resources required to meet the demand of the projected population is equivalent to almost three planets. As the shortage of natural resources looms, it is imperative to achieve SDG 12 “Ensuring Sustainable Consumption and Production” and transition from linear to a circular economy.

In light of the global agenda to decouple economic growth from heavy use of resources and environmental degradation, the Asia-Europe Environment Forum (ENVforum) has embarked on a 3-year project plan, since 2018, focusing on the implementation of SDG 12.

This year’s flagship event, the ENVforum Annual Conference 2020, took place amidst a global pandemic. The conference titled “Connecting the dots: Creating an enabling environment for SDG12 in ASEM”, which took place 9-11 November 2020 virtually, brought new perspectives on the topics of antimicrobial resistance (AMR); inclusive food value chains; sustainable garments; and single-use plastics, all with special consideration to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The conference has closely aligned itself with the theme of the 13th ASEM Summit (ASEM13), “Strengthening Multilateralism for Shared Growth” which aims to reinforce Asia-Europe partnership to ensure that multilateralism can bring about global growth that is not only “sustainable” but can also be “shared”.

Acknowledgements

Despite the measures and restrictions in place to control the spread of COVID-19 pandemic, the ENVforum perceived the move to a virtual platform as an opportunity to widen its participation. As a result, the conference saw a record-breaking 443 participant registrations (~4 times more than previous years) and was able to feature over 30 experts and practitioners from civil society organisations, governments, and businesses in Asia and Europe.

The ENVforum would like to thank the following representatives from our consortium partners for opening and concluding the conference: **Ambassador Toru MORIKAWA, Executive Director from Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF); Ambassador Leon FABER, Deputy Executive Director from ASEF; Mr Niall O'CONNOR, Asia Center Director of Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) Asia; Mr Markus FERBER, Member of the European Parliament and Chairman of the Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF); Mr Yasuo TAKAHASHI, Executive Director from Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES); and Mr Choonglai CHO, Secretary-General of ASEM Eco-Innovation Center (ASEIC).** The tremendous support for the ENVforum consortium partners has been instrumental in the success and the continuation of the ENVforum programme.

The ENVforum would also like to thank the following experts and facilitator for sharing insightful knowledge on these issues:

On behavioural change: **Ms Kuntum MELATI, Research Associate – Policy Specialist on SDGs, SEI.**

On antimicrobial resistance: **Ms Riko KIMOTO, Project Manager, ASEF; Mr Jason GALE, Senior Editor, Bloomberg; Dr Katinka DE BALOGH, Senior Animal Health and Production Officer, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); Mr Mark DRISCOLL, Director, Tasting the Future; and Dr Philip MATHEW, Deputy Director, Re-Act Asia Pacific.** We would also like to acknowledge the rapporteur of the thematic stream, **Dr Lukas MÜLLER.**

On inclusive food value chains: **Dr Clemens GRÜNBÜHEL, Senior Policy Expert, SEI; Ms Erin SWEENEY, Manager, Sustainable Business and Investment, Grow Asia; Mr Santosh SINGH, Director and Head, Energy, Climate Change and Agriculture, Intellecap; Ms Cristina EGHE-NTER, Deputy Director Social Development, Indigenous Peoples Governance and Local food systems, WWF Indonesia; and Dr Andrew D. POWELL, CEO, Asia BioBusiness Pte Ltd.** We would also like to acknowledge the rapporteur of the thematic stream, **Ms Pimolporn JINTARITH.**

On sustainable garment: **Ms Jacqueline KACPRZAK, Counsellor to the Minister, Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy of Poland; Mr Lars Fogh MORTENSEN, Expert, European Environment Agency (EEA); Ms Loraine GATLABAYAN, SCP Expert, SWITCH-Asia SCP Facility; Ms Katia VLADIMIROVA, Senior Research Associate, University of Geneva; Mr Radu MARES, Raoul Wallenberg Institute; Ms Anna MIAZGA, Sustainability Expert, LPP; and Ms Dorothy LOVELL, Policy Analyst, OECD.** We would also like to acknowledge the rapporteur of the thematic stream, **Dr Luca COSCIEME.**

On single-use plastics: **Ms Grazyna PULAWSKA, Acting Director & Ms Nur A'in A. RAZAK, ASEF; Dr Dora ALMASSY, Researcher, Central European University; Ms Stefania MINISTRINI, Expert in international cooperation, EEA; Dr Arab HOBALLAH, Team Leader, SWITCH-Asia SCP Facility; Mr Denis SCHAEFER, Team Leader, Prevent Plastics Myanmar; Dr Zaneta STASISKIENE, Director of the Institute of Environmental Engineering, Kaunas University of Technology; and Ms Mizuki KATO, Policy Researcher, Sustainable Consumption and Production Area, IGES.** We would also like to acknowledge the rapporteur of the thematic stream, **Dr Magnus BENGTTSSON.**

We would also like to thank **Mr Tim FORSLUND, Circular Economy Specialist, Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra** for participating in the closing panel.

Conference Outcomes

The 3-day conference provided a platform for representatives from various stakeholders including civil society organisations, governments, and businesses from Asia and Europe to exchange experiences, including challenges and best practices, on sustainable consumption and production (SCP) and the transition into the circular economy. The conference was designed to promote exchanges on regional and international levels and highlight different multi-stakeholder initiatives or partnerships, including from the private sector, in promoting the adoption of SCP practices.

These were the thematic concerns explored during the conference:

- » Blueprints for Making Behaviour Change Last
- » Stream 1: Health Agenda Post COVID-19 – Example of AMR
- » Stream 2: Inclusive Food Value Chains as a Way of Transition to Circular Economy
- » Stream 3: Sustainable Garment
- » Stream 4: The Plastic Initiatives – 3R in Action

The discussion points and outcomes from the 4 thematic streams were incorporated into policy briefs to be shared at ASEM13.

This chapter provides the outcomes of the conference.

Blueprints for Making Behaviour Change Last

Consumption and production patterns are largely influenced by lifestyle practices of the majority – changing of consumption and production patterns requires a shift in lifestyle trends. Effective interventions which aimed at making lasting changes requires an understanding of what drives a behavioural change. Specifically, we need to understand (1) the decision-making process around the adoption of new practices; (2) the spread of information about new practices, identifying key actors and institutions; and (3) how to measure the impact of adoption.

(1) Understanding the process of decisions around the adoption of new practices

First, these are the 5 factors in decision-making processes (adapted from Geertz, 1987):

These 5 factors can be influenced many other factors, for example, risk mitigation versus income maximisation; mul-

Perception	» What are the options and perceived alternatives?
Prioritisation	» Among the perceived alternatives, which ones were deemed viable? » Which were seen as too risky?
Judgment	» What were the criteria for judgment? » Who was taking the decision? » Who was consulted?
Decision	» How was the decision reached? » Who was involved? » What were the eventual grounds on which the decision was based? » Was there sufficient information available?
Action	» How was the decision implemented? By whom? » Was there a risk mitigation strategy? » Were the expected results achieved?

tifunctional use of resources; social preferences and traditions; and access to technology and information.

(2) Understanding the spread of information about new practices, identifying key actors and institutions

Second, the information could be spread through interactions and influence between households, people, and institutions. It is useful to understand how information regarding novel practices are spread, including the transfer of materials or resources containing this information.

One of the tools that we can use is through power mapping and social network analysis. This analysis will help us identify the stakeholders involved and who has the most strategic role in influencing our targeted audience.

In this aspect, the perception of new ideas is influenced by factors like familiarity, changes in resources, capacity, risk, interests, and aspirations.

(3) Understanding how to measure the impact of adoption

Third, people are more willing to change their behaviour if they realise the positive result of the new practice. The impact is measured in terms of (1) Adoption change, i.e., recent decisions, actions, or shifts in livelihood strategies/patterns; (2) Resources changes, i.e., changes in material and immaterial assets; and (3) livelihood changes, i.e., health benefits, skills/knowledge etc.

Outcomes of Stream 1

“Health Agenda Post COVID-19 – Example of AMR”

KEY MESSAGE

Without our joint cross-sectoral effort, the health sector alone cannot combat the Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) same as COVID-19 pandemic. For example, there is a need to consider antibiotic quantity reduction used in livestock production, which is part of the food systems for our daily life.

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the impact of the health crisis on our society. There is a range of health threats beyond respiratory infection like SARS-CoV-2. Out of those, one which may cause a future catastrophe is Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR). AMR is often referred to as a “slow pandemic”, the “climate change of health” or a “silent tsunami”. It is estimated that AMR currently causes 700,000 death annually, and the figure is projected to increase to 10,000,000 by 2050.

According to the World Bank, the economic impact connected to AMR is projected at approximately USD 100 trillion in total by 2050. It is now well-recognised that public health emergencies can jeopardise our life freezing social and economic progress. The COVID-19 pandemic is a public health issue requiring collaboration from the public, such as social distancing and handwashing. Without our effort individually, the health sector alone cannot combat the COVID-19 pandemic, and AMR is the same.

Stream 1 concluded with a consensus that AMR is a public health emergency that requires urgent actions and inter-sectoral collaboration between the health and the non-health sectors. Using the momentum that public health concerns have gained over the course of this year, lessons learnt from COVID-19 can be applied to the fight against AMR. Consumers should be aware of the use of antibiotics in food production and its impact on AMR and their future health. To generate more mindful eaters, increasing public knowledge on AMR beyond the healthcare setting is essential. The health sector has been working on AMR under the One Health concept, and they need support from the public to win over AMR. It is the time for “One Health, Our Health”, to have global intersectoral collaboration, including consumers and producers.

The full policy brief resulting from this stream outlines steps on tackling AMR, specifically, positive trends to keep, negative factors to discard and certain efforts to improve or scale-up.

[READ THE POLICY BRIEF ►](#)



Outcomes of Stream 2

“Inclusive Food Value Chains as a Way of Transition to Circular Economy”

KEY MESSAGE

There is a need to shift from the dominant food systems model that relies heavily on chemical input, monoculture, and large industrial systems. Policies that help secure tenure for small-scale farmers and indigenous peoples; and multi stakeholders and multi-rights holder platform are crucial for the shift to a more sustainable and equitable food value chain.

According to Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2018), industrial food systems require 70% of resources and produce only 30% of global food production. In contrast, smallholder systems are more efficient, using 30% of resources and yield 70% of the world's food. Today, food systems drive environmental degradation and biodiversity loss and are responsible for 37% of greenhouse gas emissions (Stockholm Environment Institute, 2020). To avoid scarcity of natural resources and to threaten future food security, food systems must adhere to sustainable, ecological and inclusive principles.

Inclusive food value chains are food production and processing systems that generate value for all actors along the chain -- from farmers, processors, transporters, manufacturers, down to the wholesalers and retailers. It needs to also usher in benefits for marginalised groups in the value chain, including women, poor, and vulnerable. Food value chains, apart from being inclusive, can also be deemed sustainable if the environmental burden on resources, such as land, water, energy, and air, is reduced and mitigated equally among stakeholders. Examples of

steps towards inclusive and sustainable food value chains include, but are not limited to, reduction of post-harvest losses and food waste, transparency in supply chains, Participatory Guarantee Systems, sustainable production (e.g., agroecology), and recognition of the farmer as a provider of an ecosystem and climate services.

Stream 2 highlighted the importance to support family and smallholder farmers, their localised production systems and higher resilience contribute to sustainable development across social, economic, and environmental outcomes. Collaborative support from all relevant stakeholders to identify the current issues and the way forward is essential to realise the potential of family farmers and small-holding farmers to be potent agents of change in achieving the SDGs.

The full policy brief resulting from this stream outlines steps on promoting inclusive food chains, specifically, positive trends to keep, negative factors to discard and certain efforts to improve or scale-up.

[READ THE POLICY BRIEF ►](#)



Outcomes of Stream 3 “Garments Sustainability”

KEY MESSAGE

There is a need for Policy regulation of this crucial sector that consumes a lot of natural resources (mostly water) for transitioning towards a cleaner and fairer garments value chains while preserving the economic benefits of the sector.

The number of garments produced annually in the world has doubled since 2000, with over 150 billion items produced in 2016. This corresponds to nearly 20 new items of clothing per person on Earth. In the same period, clothing utilisation declined by 36% globally, and up to 70% in China. One of the drivers of these trends is the ‘fast fashion’ phenomenon, with a quicker turnaround of new styles, increased number of collections offered per year, and lower prices. This fosters overproduction, with around 30% of garments produced annually never sold.

Negative environmental and social impacts characterise garments life-cycle in Asia and Europe. The fashion industry alone is the second-largest consumer of water in the world – consuming 1.5 trillion litres per year – responsible for ~20% of industrial water pollution from textile treatment and dyeing, and contributing to ~35% (i.e. 190,000 tonnes per year) of oceanic primary microplastic pollution. Furthermore, the industry produces up to 10% of global CO2 emissions, emitting over 1.7 bil-

lion tonnes annually, as well as vast quantities of textile waste, of over 92 million tonnes per year, much of which is landfilled or incinerated.

Stream 3 stressed that even though the implementation of sustainable garments sector at the global level is a challenge due to globalisation and the complexity of its value-chains, it is an absolute necessity due to the magnitude of negative externalities produced. international cooperation and coherent policies across countries are essential for producing sustainable models. Mitigating overconsumption could be achieved by, among others, influencing quality and durability, and price through adoption of cleaner and more fair production systems and taxing for resource use and externalities.

The full policy brief resulting from this stream outlines steps on ensuring sustainability in the garments sector, specifically, positive trends to keep, negative factors to discard and certain efforts to improve or scale-up.

[READ THE POLICY BRIEF ►](#)



Outcomes of Stream 4 “The Plastic Initiatives – 3R in Action”

KEY MESSAGE

There is considerable potential for synergies if single-use plastic waste reduction efforts are coordinated across the supply chains such as green procurements and product design & innovation, among others. The impact of the 3Rs (reduce-reuse-recycle) should be strengthened by focusing on the transition towards the reduction of Single-use plastic production.

The world produces more than 400 million tons of plastic per year, most of it used for single-use items designed for immediate disposal. The overconsumption of single-use plastics and the mismanagement of resulting waste has led to an estimated 12 billion tons of plastic buried in landfills or dispersed in the natural environment, causing local and transboundary environmental problems.

Other than the widely-known environmental impact of the leakage of single-use plastics into seas and oceans, excessive single-use plastic consumption and its mismanagement of its waste pose a plethora of negative externalities. This includes other environmental impacts such as air, soil and water pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions throughout the stages of its lifecycle. The mismanagement of its waste also impacts vulnerable communities the most due to the lack of infrastructure and proper waste management facilities. Economically, estimated USD 80-120 billion of material value annually is lost to the economy after a short first use. The total value of negative externalities is conservatively estimated to be at USD 40 billion and is expected to increase significantly in a business-as-usual scenario.

ENVforum’s research and the subsequent discussions during Stream 4 showed that there is a potential to create synergies among various initiatives. To do so effectively, governance mechanisms and implementation arrangements need to be strengthened to better coordinate activities across the plastic production and consumption chains. Since the single-use plastic waste problem is a global challenge, local and national solutions should be further supported by international efforts addressing the plastic production and consumption chain. Cooperation between Asian and European member countries of ASEM could be an important starting point for such actions.

The full policy brief resulting from this stream outlines steps on tackling single-use plastics, specifically, positive trends to keep, negative factors to discard and certain efforts to improve or scale-up.

[READ THE POLICY BRIEF ►](#)



Conclusion

The ENVforum took on the topic of the SDG12 when it became apparent that there are significant gaps that needed to be addressed in order to foster the achievement of responsible consumption and production. One of the issues is related to inconsistent policy coverage. ASEM countries often have a number of related policies & strategies in place, but a gap remains from unresolved challenges such as lack of clarity on green procurement, continued existence of fossil fuel subsidies, food waste and a lack of sufficient recycling. Moreover, some ASEM partner countries do not link SCP policies and goals directly to SDG 12 targets, which is why rapidly growing consumption and production cannot be addressed in an appropriate manner.

Despite joint global efforts by multiple stakeholders, the world has not reached the point where the targets of SDG 12 have been achieved with success. Our main challenges remain in the areas of overconsumption and waste with regards to natural resources with the particular focus on water, energy and food.

The ENVforum Annual Conference 2020 gave a comprehensive perspective on some of the most pertinent topics and challenges of sustainable consumption and production that ought to be tackled, and concluded by giving an overview of potential approaches to close the loop and shift towards circularity. We strongly believe that this transformation is necessary as well as feasible through widespread cooperation and partnerships across stakeholders and policymakers.

Additionally, collective efforts from policy to practice are needed to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic through green recovery, and to build more resilient and sustainable supply chains in Asia and Europe.

The Asia-Europe Environment Forum (ENVforum) Consortium



The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) promotes understanding, strengthens relationships and facilitates cooperation among the people, institutions and organisations of Asia and Europe. ASEF enhances dialogue, enables exchanges and encourages collaboration across the thematic areas of culture, education, governance, economy, sustainable development, public health and media.

ASEF is an intergovernmental not-for-profit organisation located in Singapore. Founded in 1997, it is the only institution of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM).

ASEF runs more than 25 projects a year, consisting of around 100 activities, mainly conferences, seminars, workshops, lectures, publications, and online platforms, together with about 150 partner organisations. Each year over 3,000 Asians and Europeans participate in ASEF's activities, and much wider audiences are reached through its various events, networks and web-portals.

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