

***Conclusions and Recommendations of First International Forum on Sustainable Consumption and Production in China***  
**Changsha, Hunan Province, China**  
**December 6-8, 2003<sup>1</sup>**

Over 400 participants from China - representing governments and authorities, academia and research, businesses and civil society – gathered in the City of Changsha, Hunan Province, China, from 6-8 December, 2003. They listened to and discussed with 20 distinguished speakers from China, as well as 15 international distinguished speakers coming from 11 countries from within Asia, from other regions, and from the United Nations and other international organizations. The participants discussed in their expert capacity the importance of sustainable consumption and production policies, they took stock of existing activities and remaining challenges, they exchanged information and experiences, and recommended future activities. After careful deliberations they came to the following conclusions and recommendations:

**I. Achieving sustainable consumption and production policies are key priorities for Chinese economic, social, ecological and technological development, towards the establishment of a circular economy.**

- China has the need and potential to quadruple its economic growth over the next decades in a sustainable way. It is increasingly becoming evident that China faces enormous challenges to meet the needs of its population within the limits of available environmental resources and without degrading its ecosystem. Traditional consumption and production patterns would exhaust the resources and overwhelm existing capacities. China is pursuing its economic growth in a sustainable way. Despite considerable progress made, China is in a severe environmental situation in which worsening trends have not yet been reversed.
- The pressure on the environment and natural resource base needs to be diminished and the different gaps between the rich and the poor (gaps in personal income, gaps between rich and poor regions, and gaps between urban and rural communities) need to be decreased in order to achieve an increase of the quality of life of all its people;
- New paths for development need to be found in order to achieve a new balance between mankind, nature and technology. Mankind and nature need to re-find a harmonious co-existence through a combination of ethical and technological progress;
- China therefore needs to develop a national initiative on sustainable consumption and production through a circular economy.<sup>2</sup> The framework and practical elements need to reflect Chinese characteristics and needs, and should include a revision of existing policies and practices. China will thereby also contribute to an enrichment of emerging Asia-Pacific regional strategies. The Chinese model will inspire the broader international community in the development of their own activities, as called for in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, which encourages the development of a ten-year framework of programmes in support of regional and national initiatives. The importance of taking an active role in the

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<sup>1</sup> draft version, un-edited, not final

<sup>2</sup> Circular economy is a concept based upon economic and efficient utilization of resources in an integrated approach with shared responsibilities of various stakeholders

- implementation of such initiatives was re-confirmed by UNEP's Governing Council and Global Ministerial Environment Forum of February, 2003;
- Developing and implementing integrative approaches to adopt sustainable patterns of consumption and production, based upon a firm scientific base and leading to urgent action by all groups in society, is essential for the establishment of such a circular economy.

**II. Experiences and ongoing activities to establish a circular economy and to implement sustainable consumption and production policies were welcomed and appreciated, and need to be further developed in all relevant areas. Participants recommended the following actions:**

- Raise *awareness* of leaders at various levels, businesses and the general public – focusing on different target groups like youth and women - about the importance of the circular economy and sustainable consumption and production. Develop, adopt and carry out *information and education* efforts as well as *training* programmes, in areas such as household consumption, Cleaner Production, cleaner technologies, product and service design, marketing, award schemes for sustainable business and research activities, and life cycle management. Media should inform the public and link the environmental message to news and entertainment programmes. Mechanisms for public access to information should be enhanced. Civil society groups should be supported in their important role of raising awareness and informing the public;
- Special attention should be paid to the *role of women* in consumption, production, management and education. Strengthening of capacity building for women in the area of sustainable consumption and production is needed. Gender issues should be integrated in decision-making processes at various levels;
- Improve and optimize relevant *laws and regulations*, and implement new legislation where appropriate, with clear mechanisms to monitor and enforce, and punish misconduct;
- Initiate initiatives that encourage *circular economy*, such as, waste management, environmental product standards and product regulations, product and service design to promote re-duce, re-use and recycling of materials. Influences and hazards to human health should be reduced to the minimum;
- Encourage *environmental auditing and reporting, environmental management accounting and investments* by business, as well as *sustainable procurement and performance assessments* on the basis of contribution to the circular economy of governments and authorities (eg. green GDP). Tax reforms, subsidies and market based instruments should mobilize resources for public and private investments in the circular economy. In particular small and medium sized enterprises should be assisted with guidelines and information about available technologies, by government related associations or business information platforms;
- *Scientific research and analysis* need to be strengthened in areas such as cleaner technologies, best practices, resource-efficiency, waste water treatment and measuring progress through well-developed indicators;
- Develop and implement *new types of industrialization* in a circular economy, by development of eco-industrial parks, urban solid waste management, water management, renewable energy, organic food, sustainable product and service systems design, life cycle management models;

- Implement *demonstration and pilot projects* in areas such as agriculture, urban and rural community development, energy, transport, water resource protection, and tourism.

**III. The First China Forum on Sustainable Consumption and Production should contribute to a process to implement the circular economy. This would ensure further development and *implementation* of the recommendations in China. It would also enable mutual exchange of information between countries in the region and in the world. Participants recommended the following activities:**

- *A comprehensive strategy and action plan* on circular economy and sustainable consumption and production patterns need to be developed and implemented for the next ten years. Such a plan of action should include the following phases: awareness raising, information sharing and training, developing strategies and planning of activities, implementation of demonstration projects, and monitoring and feedback;
- *Support and expertise* should be sought through strategic partnerships with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) - in particular through its UNEP Office in Beijing - the European Union, and other international organizations and donor countries. China should intensify its *international co-operation* with the United Nations and other organizations in areas such as the Millennium Development Goals, the Global Compact, Cleaner Production Declaration, UN Guidelines on Consumer Protection and the Life Cycle Initiative.
- *The outcomes of the meeting and its proposed follow up* should be reported to the next Global Ministerial Environment Forum, to be held in the Republic of Korea, 29-31 March, 2004, as well as to the next meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development (April, 2004) and other relevant international, regional and national meetings.

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