

SWITCH-Asia Launch Event in Central Asia

PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION (SCP)

5 July 2019 – The Orion Hotel, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan



The EU SWITCH-Asia Launch Event in Central Asia has been co-organised by the SWITCH-Asia SCP Facility, the European Commission, Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO), and concerned European Union Delegations.

ACRONYMS

10YFP	10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (One Planet Network)
COI	Community of Interest (SWITCH-Asia)
DG DEVCO	European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
EUD	Delegation of the European Union
GGGI	Global Green Growth Institute
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
NFP	National Focal Point
SCP	Sustainable Consumption and Production
SCPF	SWITCH-Asia Sustainable Consumption and Production Facility/ SCP Facility
SPP	Sustainable Public Procurement

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INTRODUCTION

“Countries in Central Asia are well-aware of the urgent need to switch to more sustainable production and consumption patterns and green economy. Being in a transition period towards green economy, the launching of the SCP SWITCH-Asia in Central Asia is timely and very opportune.”

Avtandil Alybaev

Deputy Minister of Economy, Kyrgyzstan



This report summarises the presentations and discussions that took place at the EU SWITCH-Asia Launch Event in Central Asia, co-organized by the SWITCH-Asia SCP Facility, the European Commission, Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO), and concerned European Union Delegations.

The EU-funded SWITCH Asia programme was launched in 2007 to support Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) and to promote inclusive sustainable growth while contributing to the economic prosperity and poverty reduction in Asia and Central Asia and supporting the development of a green economy and the transition towards a low-carbon, resource-efficient and circular economy.

The programme covers 24 countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, China, DPR Korea, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). In its first phase, covering 19 countries except Central Asia, seven calls for proposals were successfully implemented from 2007 to 2017 (in total around EUR 230 million). More than 100 projects were financed and support was provided to over 400 Asian and European non-for-profit partners, approximately 100 private sector associates and benefiting up to 70.000 Asian micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).

The transition to sustainable consumption and production requires political, economic, institutional, behavioural and technological shifts. These are made possible through a combined application of sustainable consumption and production principles, approaches and strategies. Over the next years (2019-2022), the five countries in Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) will be benefitting from the support of experts from the SWITCH-Asia Sustainable Consumption and Production Facility (SCP Facility) and from a grant scheme that has been set up to support pilot projects testing new approaches on SCP in the region.

The objectives of this launch event were to:

- Introduce the SWITCH-Asia programme in Central Asia, discuss challenges and opportunities related to SCP;
- Define the SWITCH-Asia Work Plan for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan for the next three years.

Structure of the Report

The structure of this report is guided by the agenda of the launch event. The one-day event that took place in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, was divided into eight sessions, each with their own theme relevant to Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) in Central Asia. Each chapter is built around a session and summarises the main points made by each speaker.



OPENING SESSION

Opening Speakers

The conference was opened by Micha Ramakers, Deputy Head of Unit for Middle East, Central Asia and South Asia, European Commission who explained, more than twenty-five years ago, governments came together at the Earth Summit in Rio with the idea that the world needed to change the way it was treating its environment. Since then, the international community took several steps. In 2015, the Paris Agreement set the framework for future targets on climate change adaptation. Around the world, 169 countries are committed to it. These include both the EU Member States and the five countries in Central Asia. However, despite agreements and efforts to mitigate the effects of climate change, megatrends such as urbanisation, rising incomes, economic and trade integration are changing consumer patterns and transforming our societies and our economies.



Unsustainable production models and consumption patterns continue to exist, increasing the pressure on natural resources. In the last years, the combined impact of climate change, which has started to reduce water flow by shrinking the glaciers that feed Central Asian rivers, and rapid population growth exacerbated some of the region's environmental concerns, with potential implications for economic development, security and migration. The population in Uzbekistan, for instance, jumped from 32 to 33 million in 6 years. This shows the economic potential of this country, but it also brings about new challenges on consumption patterns. The modernisation and transition of the agricultural and industrial sectors in other countries, instead, has shown that current production models are outdated. Europe is also facing similar patterns both on consumption and on production, Ramakers explained. For this reason, the EU has been supporting the shift to a low-carbon and a more circular economy within its Member States.

This region has been regularly involved in sustainable consumption and production discussions since 2015 when a first regional meeting was organised in Almaty by UN Environment and the Secretariat of 10 Year Framework of Programmes. Sustainable housing, energy efficiency, public procurement and sustainable food systems were identified as regional priorities. The launch of the SWITCH-Asia programme in the region will move in that direction and joint efforts will be required.



Eduard Auer, head of the European Union Delegation to Kyrgyzstan, emphasized that Central Asia has a centuries-old tradition of bringing Europe and Asia together. Cooperation between the European Union and the region can bring real, tangible benefits, from stronger and diversified economies, to more job opportunities, and a more peaceful, secure region for all. The alignment of the new EU Strategy on Central Asia and SWITCH-Asia's overall objectives was also recognised. In particular, the importance of supporting the private sector and small and medium-sized enterprises; turning environmental challenges into opportunities; sharing know-how on renewable energy and energy efficiency; cooperating on energy, water, environment and the use of natural resources; and stimulating regional exchanges on competitiveness and the business environment.

Avtandil Alybaev, Deputy Minister of Economy, Kyrgyzstan, closed the session by recognizing the benefits of shifting to green economy and the need for more responsible approaches, especially in this rapidly modernizing region. A more sustainable approach requires using less water, energy and more responsible food consumption. Climate change has not only short term effects on Kyrgyzstan, but also long term effects such as poverty, deterioration of health, and shortage of food. At the UN Environment Conference in Almaty in 2015, Kyrgyzstan expressed its will to transition to SCP patterns, this has also been included in the country's national strategy for green economy.

KEY MESSAGES

1

Sustainability in our societies is no longer simply about increasing efficiencies or complying with regulations; it is about making fundamental changes in the way business is done and the way the world consumes.

2

Central Asia has a centuries-old tradition of bringing Europe and Asia together. Cooperation between the European Union and the region can bring real, tangible benefits, from stronger and diversified economies, to more job opportunities, and a more peaceful, secure region for all.

3

Countries in Central Asia are well-aware of the urgent need to switch to more sustainable production and consumption patterns and green economy.



INTRODUCTION TO THE SWITCH-ASIA PROGRAMME

Global trends and climate change, the EU SCP response

Alessandra Lepore, EU SWITCH-Asia Coordinator

In this session, Alessandra Lepore, EU SWITCH-Asia Coordinator, presented the EU SCP response to global trends and climate change and stressed the importance of mobilizing youth all over the world to take action. Major causes of climate change, including unsustainable production models and consumption patterns were introduced, as well as the need for better carbon management, leading to a low carbon resource efficient economy. Ongoing multiple initiatives and actions in support of SCP were presented, including the European “Green Action Plan for SMEs”, the Circular Economy Package, the EU Strategy for Plastics, the EU Framework Directive on Waste, and the EU Strategy for Central Asia, among others. The session concluded with the presentation of the SWITCH Asia II programme and the proposed joint way forward.

SWITCHing to SCP, driving and enabling green economy delivery

Arab Hoballah, Team Leader of the SCP Facility

Arab Hoballah, Team Leader of the SCP Facility, introduced the importance of switching to SCP and the uniqueness of the SWITCH-Asia programme in addressing current environmental challenges and raising people’s awareness on the benefits of switching to SCP practices. As economic growth continues to increase, particularly in Asia, efficiency is yet to be achieved. Joint efforts, context-sensitive solutions and strategies for the implementation of SCP are needed. A remark was also made on how media usually focus on reporting about disasters rather than achievements and opportunities. This greatly affects people’s understanding of specific issues, as well as consumers’ behaviour.



CONSUMING AND PRODUCING SUSTAINABLY IN CENTRAL ASIA: STATE OF PLAY, NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

Panel Moderator: Zikrina Zulfira, Key Expert for Central Asia, SCP Facility SWITCH-Asia Programme.

This session was introduced and moderated by Zikrina Zulfira who presented information on common issues, challenges and needs in the region. Priority sectors identified in Central Asia include: agriculture, construction, water and energy management, and SMEs. The importance of strengthening activities towards green and circular economy, innovation and digitalisation was also stressed. Zulfira introduced the Regional SPP UNEP project which has already started in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Specific country issues were subsequently presented by focal points and country representatives.



The second speaker, Aibek Kadyrov (focal point from Kyrgyzstan), introduced the progress the country has made in moving towards a green economy. Kyrgyzstan has already approved strategies on sustainable development and green economy and has endorsed the concept of organic agriculture. The work of UN Page was initiated in 2016, under the approved law on accession of the Kyrgyz Republic to the Agreement on the establishment of the Global Green Growth Institute. Green economy week will be also organised in November 2019.



The first speaker, Kerey Bekbergen (focal point from Kazakhstan), announced the establishment of the new Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources, and its main priorities, namely, the approval of a new Ecocode by the end of 2019, and the need for mainstreaming sustainable consumption and production patterns into the state governmental planning system. Commitment to support the implementation of sustainable public procurement and ecolabeling, developing national standards, increasing the proportion of renewable energy, and bringing waste treatment to 40% was also expressed.

The third speaker, Sokhib Yuldashev from Uzbekistan introduced the work of the State Environmental Committee. Waste management remains a major challenge in the country, with 2.4 billion tonnes of industrial waste and 71.9 million m³. A proper and efficient waste management system must be created. Moreover, Uzbekistan is the first Central Asian country to become a member of the Global Green Growth Institute. Its strategy to transition to a green economy is soon to be approved, and ecolabeling of production will be implemented starting from January 2020. The importance of applying international standards was also stressed.



Zafar Makhmudov, CAREC Executive Director for Central Asia, provided an overview of the current situation in Central Asia when it comes to water and energy resources. Currently, countries in Central Asia are facing challenges in both water governance and water management systems due to inefficient irrigation and drainage networks, outdated legislative and normative documents and agreements, lack of awareness on the most pressing issues in water management and their solutions, insufficient involvement and participation of local communities in water management, and lack of incentive-based economic tools

to support basin ecosystems. The role of CAREC in the region has been crucial in assisting Central Asia governments, regional and international stakeholders, including donors, in addressing environmental and sustainability challenges across the region. This has also been done through the Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Programme, through which support has been provided for the formulation of countries' national policies on climate change and sustainable energy through the use of low-carbon development principles, energy efficiency, promotion of renewable sources and introduction of adaptation and climate resilient measures.



Vepa Malikgulyyev, International Expert from Turkmenistan closed the panel with insights on the private sector's motivation to address environmental issues. Central Asian producers must understand that in order to be competitive and be able to export their products to developed markets, they need to be conscious about sustainable production requirements, as well as gain certification and comply to those standards. Certifications like Global G.A.P. or ISO 14001 are just examples of existing mechanisms that can be adopted, he explained. In addition to consumers and market's demands (external factors), internal production efficiency and potential savings should serve as a more sustainable motivational factor for effectively addressing environmental concerns at every Central Asian enterprise and farm.

KEY MESSAGES

1

Central Asian countries are committed to advancing a green economy. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have already developed their green economy strategy, while other countries are in the process of developing theirs as well. Renewable energy, municipal waste management, and sustainable public procurement have been identified as main priorities.

2

Identified common challenges in Central Asia include: hazardous waste and chemicals management, high level energy consumption, and unsustainable water consumption, particularly in agriculture.

3

Preliminary country needs were discussed during this session and activities to be conducted were identified by speakers.



PLENARY SESSION I: "ENABLING POLICY FRAMEWORKS FOR SCP"

Session Moderator: Zafar Makhmudov, Executive Director, Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia (CAREC)

This session was introduced and moderated by Zafar Makhmudov, Executive Director, Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia (CAREC).



The first speaker, Ms. Aidai Kurmanova, provided an overview of specific actions that can be taken through the SWITCH-Asia programme and the transition to SCP. The Central Asian region is very attractive for the implementation of SCP, and Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have already done much work to promote sustainable development; in particular, focusing on waste management and reduction of carbon emissions. Furthermore, Ms. Kurmanova explained the programme has been effective in identifying key priorities and building close partnerships with

main stakeholders, including the EU, GIZ, ADB, among others. Little coordination between government agencies and donor aid, as well as duplication of efforts when promoting green economy initiatives were identified as challenges in Central Asia. The need for a more integrated regional approach was stressed and synergies between the EU Strategy in Central Asia and the SWITCH-Asia programme were also traced.



The second speaker, Ms. Jin Young Kim, Director for Asia, Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), highlighted principles of green growth that are important for developing countries, generating economic opportunities and creating green jobs. Kim explained, in Central Asia, it is vital to focus on water and waste management and balance economic growth and environmental protection, making SCP economically viable. The importance

of learning from good case studies was expressed, and two projects were presented, namely, E-mobility in Nepal and Energy Efficiency for the SME Sector in Thailand. It is crucial to learn from best practices from other countries, as well as from the challenges incurred when implementing these projects.



Mr. Kyialbek Temishev, Programme Policy Officer, World Food Programme (WFP) praised the potential of SWITCH-Asia to affect people’s minds towards shifting to more sustainable and responsible consumption and production patterns. He further explained, Kyrgyzstan is in the process of developing a national strategy for green economy and the country has been pursuing an environmentally friendly model of development through initiatives ranging from organic agriculture to energy-efficient lighting and renewable technologies, as well as the creation of a special economic zone for green tech-companies. Key points of the national strategy include: the optimization of school meals and the introduction of hot meals (this will improve attendance and performance in schools); providing support to smallholders and graduation from poverty and reduction of losses in the value chain (this step involves the implementation of SKAP and solving the problem of plastic overuse); improving community resilience to DRR/CCA, for greener production and recycling; improving capacity building of government officials and introducing policies and tools to ensure food security.



The next speaker, Mr. Oleg Pechenyuk presented on topics related to economic development, green growth and green economy, specifically the need for less consumption of energy and resources, usage of eco-friendly technologies and provisions for cleaner services. Strategic initiatives in Kyrgyzstan were presented, as well as implementation challenges. The need for inter-ministerial and inter-agency cooperation has been identified as a requirement; without the engagement of other sectors, effective results may not be achieved.

The last speaker in this session was Mr. Bahrom Mamadaliev, who presented on Tajikistan’s national strategy 2030, the application of Norwegian clean production practices in the country and the obstacles in implementing SCP. Central Asia requires national reforms in the green business sector. Most programmes focus on grants and donor aid but not many on the private sector. The need for a more holistic and multi-sectoral approach was identified. Finally, private-public partnerships are included in the national strategy but are still to be developed and strengthened.

KEY MESSAGES

1

In order to complement donor support and activities in Central Asia, and avoid duplication of efforts, countries are encouraged to consult documents developed by UNEP, ICSD and key stakeholders.

2

Demonstration of practical SCP tools and sharing of good practices and knowledge from other countries are relevant to the work that will be conducted in Central Asia.

3

Countries themselves need to prioritize green economy programmes and initiatives; not the donors. Donors’ role is to support countries to implement planned activities and stronger government’s commitment is necessary.



PLENARY SESSION II: "TOOLS TO SUPPORT SCP: ENERGY EFFICIENCY, SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT, ECO-LABELLING"

Session Moderator: Ilias Zhumabaev, Promotion of Sustainable Economic Development, Programme Specialist, GIZ



This session was introduced and moderated by Ilias Zhumabaev, Promotion of Sustainable Economic Development, Programme Specialist, GIZ.

The first speaker, Asel Arystanbekova stressed the importance of creating an enabling legal environment for standardisation and certification systems in Kyrgyzstan. Standards and regulations for compliance with environmental norms are powerful tools for driving green policies and sustainable development goals, as they provide incentives for voluntary initiatives in the private sector to increase energy efficiency, reduce emissions, compete in the product market, ensure rational use of resources, fair trade and foreign direct investment. Government's support is needed to raise awareness on the benefits brought by green certification.



The next speaker, Ardagul Alimkhanova, considered Producer Responsibility schemes as a major tool for the establishment of a packaging waste collection and recycling system. Financial sustainability for companies must be ensured.

Oleg Rijichenko, presented the Strategy of Action of Uzbekistan Development (2017-2021). He explained, the level of energy intensity of the economy in Uzbekistan is 3 to 4 times higher compared to the world average. Furthermore, the cost of improving the energy efficiency of the industry is 2-4 times less than the cost of commissioning new sources of primary energy. Due to the low energy efficiency, Uzbekistan loses 4.5% of its GDP each year. A number of measures to improve energy and resource efficiency are being implemented in Uzbekistan. For

example, investment projects to replace outdated equipment in the electricity industry, pilot initiatives for the reconstruction of social buildings, introducing drip irrigation, among others. Finally, a system of voluntary eco-labelling of products based on the requirements set by international standards will be introduced in Uzbekistan.



Nurzat Abdurasulova introduced the Laws on Energy Saving and on Energy Performance of Buildings in Kyrgyzstan. Challenges and recommendations were presented. Awareness-raising campaigns, coupled with the implementation of new policies and advances in technology, have been identified as the first critical steps to increasing transparency in the energy sector.



The last speaker, Virginia Fernández-Trapa, introduced ways to integrate sustainable consumption and production patterns into the tourism sector, including at the policy level. Several initiatives and their achievements from Europe, Australia, Senegal, Morocco, Brazil and Indonesia, were also presented.

KEY MESSAGES

1

By informing consumers about products and production processes and clear policies for enterprises, standards and regulations can be effective tools in achieving environmental objectives and promoting the dissemination of best practices in sustainable markets for goods and services.

2

The energy sector is a critical area for economic growth in Uzbekistan, accounting for nearly 50% of capital investments in the country, contributing 7% of total Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and generating more export revenue than any other sector. Energy efficiency is a key area of improvement to stimulate this growth.

3

Sustainable tourism creates jobs, promotes local culture and products, and has an impact on sustainable development.



PLENARY SESSION III: “EDUCATION AND AWARENESS RAISING ON SCP: NEEDS AND CHALLENGES”

Session Moderator: Rahat Sadyrbekov, Director, Center for Environment & Development, CED AUCA, for UN Page



This session was introduced and moderated by Rahat Sabyrbekov, Director, Center for Environment & Development, American University of Central Asia (CED AUCA), for UN Page.

The first speaker, Ms. Indira Shkipova, from the Public Association Ekoi-Bishkek, presented the work of her organization, the ways in which SCP and SDG promotion initiatives are being implemented in Kyrgyzstan, trends in online access to ecological information and prominent themes of interest to green movements.

The second speaker, Yslam Begadov, a young entrepreneur from Turkmenistan, introduced the SCP context in his country and explained that one of the main priorities is the protection of national flora and fauna, as well as water resources. Furthermore, Yslam explained that even though Turkmenistan produces a considerable amount of oil and gas, the country is trying to decrease its emissions and increase environmentally friendly practices.

The last speaker, Mr. Artur Vahitov, also highlighted the commitment of EcoForum, an internationally awarded organization for the promotion of sustainable development and SCP in Uzbekistan. Various initiatives that have been spearheaded by the organization were presented, including ecotourism and formal and non-formal environmental education programmes. The role of multiple stakeholders, in particular the mobilization of local communities and NGOs was recognized.

KEY MESSAGES

1

Environmental information and knowledge, including green economy perspectives, must be widely shared across multiple media platforms.

2

People living in rural areas must have access to information and knowledge concerning low cost available technologies.

3

NGOs awareness raising efforts on SCP must be strengthened.



SWITCH-ASIA SUPPORTING SCP IN CENTRAL ASIA

Lessons learnt from Mongolia, Thailand, India and Bhutan

Arab Hoballah, Team Leader of the SCP Facility

In this session, Arab Hoballah introduced lessons learnt from SWITCH-Asia grant projects in Mongolia, Thailand, India and Bhutan, and the role and support that the SCP Facility provided to targeted countries. National SCP policy contexts were also presented. Arab explained, all countries have various related framework strategies in which SCP can be mainstreamed to support implementation. Still, a comprehensive SCP Action Plan can better help connecting the dots, filling the gaps and giving a system approach understanding of the consumption and production patterns in the country. Moreover, the EU SWITCH-Asia Grants Scheme offers a unique opportunity for pilot/demonstration projects, localising and for scaling-up.

Indicative Work Programme in Central Asia for 2019-2020 and related process

Zulfira Zikrina, Key Expert for Central Asia, SCP Facility SWITCH-Asia Programme

Consultations between the EU, the EU Delegations, the NFP and the SCP Facility will consider next steps for national SCP multi-stakeholders consultations in the countries to have more in-depth discussions about challenges, opportunities and needs, better define the priorities for action, before elaborating related action plan. Such consultations are expected to lead to national dialogues in November for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, while these dialogues will be planned for early next year for Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

CONCLUDING SESSION

In the closing session, Arab Hoballah, Team Leader of the SCP Facility summarised key points and reflections addressed during the sessions.

Recommendations and Next Steps

Among other outcomes, the following could be highlighted:

Further integration of SCP into overarching policy frameworks, commitment from governments to lead by example, stronger multi-stakeholders partnerships, and effective awareness raising efforts, particularly through well-trained media professionals, will be prerequisites for the promotion of inclusive sustainable development in Central Asia, and switching people's mindsets towards responsible consumption and production.

Necessity for the next SCP policy and actions related work in the region to consider ways in connecting with the environment and development strategy for Central Asia to be launched soon. If the expected green procurement and eco-labelling needs were frequently raised, while seriously considering effective promotion of resource and energy efficiency, through buildings and construction, nutrition and food safety, tourism development and integrated waste management, in particular food, plastics and chemicals.

Induce and support eco-innovation, policy dialogues on demand side management, inter-sector and inter-ministerial consultations and collaborations, with an active involvement of the business sectors, the MSMEs and young entrepreneurs.



ANNEXES

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