

CHANGING CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

(Sect. I, chap. 3)

15. This chapter proposes two programmes:

- (a) Focusing on unsustainable patterns of production and consumption;
- (b) Developing national policies and strategies to encourage changes in unsustainable consumption patterns.

16. Since the issue is very broad, it is addressed in several parts of Agenda 21, notably those dealing with energy, transportation and wastes and in the chapters on economic instruments and transfer of technology. The present chapter should also be read in conjunction with the one below on demographic dynamics and sustainability.

PROGRAMME AREAS

A. Focusing on unsustainable patterns of production and consumption

Basis for action

[17. While poverty largely results in certain kinds of environmental stress, one of the most serious problems now facing the planet is that associated with historical patterns of unsustainable consumption and production, leading to environmental degradation, aggravation of poverty and imbalances in the development of countries.]

18. Measures to be undertaken at the international level for the protection and enhancement of the environment must take fully into account the current imbalances in the global patterns of consumption and production.

[19. Special attention should be paid to the demand for natural resources generated by unsustainable consumption and to efficient use of those resources consistent with the goal of minimizing depletion and reducing pollution. Although consumption patterns are very high in certain parts of the world, the basic consumer needs of a large section of humanity are not being met. This inequitable distribution of income and wealth results in excessive demands and unsustainable lifestyles among the richer segments, which place immense stress on the environment. The poorer, meanwhile, are unable to meet food, health care, shelter and educational needs. Changing consumption patterns will require a multipronged strategy focusing on demand, meeting the basic needs of the poor, and reducing wastage and the use of finite resources in the production process.]

20. Growing recognition of the importance of addressing consumption has also not yet been matched by understanding of its implications. Some economists