

Consuming and producing sustainably, a 'cornerstone' for reaching 2030 Global Goals, UN Forum stresses

A reckoning on the importance of maximising the world's resources is taking place across the world, and achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 depends heavily on reeling in our global consumption and production patterns, a key United Nations forum heard on Thursday.

That was one focus on the fourth day of the [High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development \(HLPF\)](#), currently taking place at UN Headquarters in New York, when delegates debated the best way to make SDG 12 a reality, highlighting what countries consume and produce.

Production and consumption activities lie at the core of our societies and our global economy, delegates heard. Ensuring that they are driven by sustainable policies and practices is therefore crucial in achieving many other goals of the Sustainable Development 2030 Agenda such as poverty alleviation, carbon emission reduction and general environmental protection.

"Goal 12 lies at the heart and soul of the 2030 Agenda," said Peter Thomson, the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for the Ocean, adding that it presents us "with a rational plan to secure the future of our species on Planet Earth, providing a train of cost-efficient and effective ways to achieve economic development, harmonize our relationship with the environment, and advance the well-being of humanity".

Goal 12 lies at the heart and soul of the 2030 Agenda – Peter Thomson, UN Ocean Envoy

Currently, mass extraction of raw materials is taking place in low-income countries to support the fast-paced consumption practices of higher-income nations. Statistics from the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs ([DESA](#)) show that developed countries have at least double the per-capita footprint of developing countries. According to experts, the path to sustainable consumption requires that our societies make efforts on three different fronts: the use of fewer resources, the reduction of waste production and accelerated recycling.

"We see a better future in the movement away from economic models that value growth for growth's sake, towards models that respect planetary boundaries and support a vision of humanity living in harmony with nature," said Mr. Thomson.

Progress is underway. To date, 93 per cent of the world's 250 largest companies are now reporting on sustainability, as are three-quarters of the

top 100 companies in 49 countries. In addition, in 2018, at least 108 countries have now developed policies and initiatives designed to improve the way people, companies and Governments consume and produce.

Further progress will require that Government decision-makers, the private sector and individuals, join forces, the Forum's panelists insisted, as some of the challenges that remain to be overcome are a lack of institutional linkages between the various actors, a lack of technical capacity and the continued exclusion of vulnerable groups from the discussion.

The HLPF, which meets annually under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council ([ECOSOC](#)) and which will run this year through 18 July, brings together more than 1,000 Government, business and civil society leaders to share lessons learnt and best practices and discuss progress made towards the SDGs adopted by 193 Member States in 2015, based on the UN Secretary-General's annual [progress report](#).

This year's Forum focuses on six of the 17 goals: To ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all (Goal 6); To provide access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all (Goal 7); To make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (Goal 11); To ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns (Goal 12); To protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and biodiversity loss (Goal 15); and To strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, that will be considered each year (Goal 17).