

Multi-stakeholder Dialogue for Collaborative Actions on Sustainable Production and Consumption in Maharashtra

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Report of the Event:

Multi-stakeholder Dialogue for Collaborative Actions on Sustainable Production and Consumption in Maharashtra

22 August 2023, Pune

This event in Pune was organised to encourage a discourse on local perspectives related to SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) involving development organisations, NGOs, the private sector, and academia. The event consisted of panel discussions as well as an interactive group exercise to gather insights into collaborative approaches and areas to achieve SDG 12, specific to the state of Maharashtra.

This event was the third event of a series of events being organised by Centre for Responsible Business (CRB) in collaboration with trusted partners in 4 cities of India with support from the EU Delegation to India. These roundtables, being organised in four regions of India (the first one in Kolkata on 8th May 2023 followed by one in Guwahati on 31 May 2023), aim to identify possible ideas for collaborative actions on SDGs.

INAUGURAL SESSION

Address by Indras Ghosh, Head – Sustain Markets, Indo-German Chamber of Commerce (IGCC)

The event started with an address from Indras Ghosh, where he talked about the importance of impactful partnerships between different industry sectors to accelerate SDG 12 at the state level in Maharashtra. It was seen in a previous study by CRB that Maharashtra is one of the leading states when it comes to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) expenditures and through meaningful partnerships, businesses can collaborate towards creating better impact through their CSR programmes. This also ties up to SDG 17 which calls for collaboration. Mr. Ghosh mentioned that SustainMarkets, the sustainability chapter at IGCC, wants to support their member companies on how they can do good for people and the planet so that it makes sense for their business growth in the long run ensuring resilient long-term business growth.



Opening Remarks by Rijit Sengupta, CEO, Centre for Responsible Business

Mr. Rijit Sengupta set the meeting flow by establishing that the dialogue to follow should translate into collaborative ideas and actions on SDG 12. He stated that one of the important and exciting things about the SDG initiative of the Government of India is that it has a *sui generis* Indian model of localization of SDGs, resting on four pillars, institutional ownership, monitoring system, capacity building and a 'whole of society' approach. He remarked that all entities are equally responsible for pushing the envelope and the Pune meeting will push the participants to think about some ideas on how they can contribute to SDG 12 in Maharashtra through effective collaboration.

Participants were urged to contemplate ways to contribute effectively to SDG 12 in Maharashtra through cooperation. Mr. Sengupta made reference to statements from Amitabh Kant, India's G20 Sherpa, and Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs, Government of India - concerning India's commitment to SDGs, climate action, and women-led development throughout the G20 Presidency. The upcoming G20 leadership summit is likely to highlight the important role of business to drive SDGs and expedite the shift towards sustainability. The government's role, in his view, is to facilitate and create conducive conditions. Business engagement on sustainability/SDGs can manifest in three ways:

- Own operations: Companies can undertake activities within their operations aligned with sustainability, either proactively due to their values or reactively in response to regulations, investor demands, or system dynamics. Businesses may also engage in joint ventures with companies committed to sustainability or adopt sustainable business models, such as manufacturing upcycled products.

- Supply chains: Initiatives driven by companies can impact their suppliers in Maharashtra, extending sustainability practices down the supply chain.
- Community initiatives: The CSR Act mandates the first 100 listed businesses to contribute 2% of their three-year annual net profit, resulting in significant CSR funding (approximately INR 3.5 crores in Maharashtra per financial year).

Mr. Sengupta concluded by outlining the expected outcomes of the event: collaborative actions focusing on policy coherence, target prioritization, a whole-society approach built on trust, long-term non-transactional partnerships, adaptability to local conditions, value creation, technological advantages, and an emphasis on technology. This meeting aimed to generate actionable strategies for achieving SDG 12 through collective efforts.



Special Remarks by Laurent le Danois, Team Leader, Cooperation Section, EU Delegation to India

In his special remarks, Mr. Laurent le Danois, noted that genuine collaboration should revolve around a shared platform for collective contributions, emphasizing the importance of collective action over individual recognition. Impressions from two roundtable events with CRB were shared. In Kolkata, a top-down approach was adopted urging EU companies to participate, while in Guwahati, a bottom-up approach stressing ownership and close involvement of the local communities was shared. He acknowledged that the EU's presence in India is a fraction of the country's vast and dynamic landscape, primarily due to India's request for partnership rather than development cooperation.

Mr. le Danois emphasized the role of European investments in supporting India's green and digital transition, aligning with the EU's global priorities and urged consideration of both environmental and human factors in green investments. Reflecting on environmental movements, he mentioned that Europe's recent experiences with natural disasters have spurred greater environmental awareness. He acknowledged India's role as a voice for the global south. While some businesses engage in greenwashing, he highlighted upcoming EU directives on due diligence (CSDDD), CSR, sustainability reporting, deforestation, and the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), which will affect both EU and foreign businesses whereby many Indian businesses operating in Europe will be impacted. He discussed the Global Gateway strategy, focusing on major green investments, and stressed the importance of building trusted relationships with India, considering it a reliable partner despite challenges. To implement this strategy, a Team Europe approach involving embassies, companies, and EU development banks will collectively contribute to making a positive impact in India.



Address by Guest of Honour, Dr. Ajit Ranade, Vice Chancellor, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics (GIPE)

Dr. Ajit Ranade, underscored India's reliability as a dependable partner compared to Russia and China, despite being categorized as a developing country. He emphasized the responsibility of businesses, directing their efforts not only toward the present generation but also toward future generations. Dr. Ranade highlighted the evolving perspective of responsible businesses and the shift in perspective among CEOs of major corporations, which now encompasses the wellbeing of employees, environmental considerations, and the protection of small shareholders' rights. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become a legal obligation, requiring companies to contribute to society. Dr. Ranade also highlighted the importance of considering the triple bottom line: people, planet, and profit, which encompasses financial gains, ethical conduct, and equity. He further mentioned a Pune-based company engaged in waste-to-biofuels exemplifying a commitment to the circular economy. Additionally, regarding the EU, he emphasized its position as a reliable and equal partner. He raised concerns about border taxes and their potential impact, noting that India's heavy reliance on renewable energy might not fully exempt it from such taxes. Therefore, he stressed the necessity of finding reliable coal substitutes to address this challenge.



PANEL DISCUSSION

Topic : Partnerships for achieving Sustainable Production and Consumption (SDG 12) - Role of Businesses

Moderator: Rijit Sengupta, *CEO, CRB*

Panellists:

- Mandar Vaidya, *Director - Materials Management, ZF India Private Limited*
- Simona Jadronova, *Founder & Director - Euro India Enterprises Development Pvt. Ltd.*
- Chetankumar Sangole, *Head – Sustainability, Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Agriculture (MCCIA)*
- Dr. Gurudas Nulkar, *Director, Centre for Sustainable Development, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics (GIPE)*
- Dr. Bharat Bhushan, *Senior Professor and Dean – Academics, Lexicon MILE*
- Sandesh Salian, *Director, Dali & Samir Engg. Pvt. Ltd.*

The panel discussions explored various aspects of sustainable production and consumption in the context of business roles and challenges.

Dr. Gurudas Nulkar highlighted the centrality of sustainable consumption in achieving a green economy. He stressed that the demand in the marketplace shapes the economy, and thus, sustainable consumption is pivotal. The challenge lies in the pursuit of possessions as status symbols, leading to overconsumption. Despite awareness, present bias often prevails, favoring immediate benefits over long-term sustainability. Sustainable consumption, according to Dr. Nulkar, is the key to steering production towards sustainability. He provided examples of responsible fishing communities in Konkan, tourism in Maharashtra, and private enterprise initiatives as models of sustainable consumption.

Dr. Bharat Bhushan emphasized the interconnectedness of the entire production and consumption process, from ecosystem to waste footprint. He highlighted the importance of localized processing and production to ensure sustainability and reduce unnecessary transportation. He cited the example of trucks transporting vegetables in Pune, where the waste generated is not transported back, leading to an unsustainable practice. Dr. Bhushan advocated for decentralized waste management technologies to complete the cycle at the production level.

Mandar Vaidya discussed India's climate ambitions and ZF's sustainability strategy, built on societal responsibility, employee well-being, and responsible business practices. He emphasized collaboration with suppliers and stakeholders to achieve climate neutrality by 2025. Building mutual respect and confidence, Vaidya stressed that actions should align with ambitions.

Simona Jadronova drew attention to the contrast between profit-driven large companies and the consciousness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). She highlighted the lack of education within companies about the reasons behind sustainability measures. She emphasized the importance of valuing all employees, including watchmen and office boys, who play a crucial role in conserving resources. Simona urged for greater awareness and collaboration, emphasizing India's potential for positive change through unity and shared values.

Sandesh Salian shared his company's journey towards sustainability, focusing on energy efficiency and environmental considerations. They optimized energy-intensive processes, reducing energy consumption by 32%,

benefiting both the environment and employee well-being. He stressed the importance of information sharing and higher prices along the supply chain to reduce waste. Additionally, Mr. Salian spoke about constructing solar parks for community benefit.

Chetankumar Sangole highlighted the predominance of the private sector and the need for data-driven decision-making. He emphasized capacity building, knowledge exchange, and the importance of implementing and evaluating the impact of sustainability initiatives. Sangole underscored the interconnectedness of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles and SDGs, relevant to all sectors.

Looking into future trends regarding SDG 12 in Maharashtra, Dr. Gurudas Nulkar advocated for decoupling revenue growth from resource consumption. He stressed the importance of transitioning to a circular economy and a renewable resource economy to add more value per resource used. Nulkar also emphasized the need to decouple revenue growth from environmental degradation by extending the life of products through recycling. Harnessing India's tropical climate for photosynthetic capacity was highlighted as a crucial future trend.

In summary, the panel discussion in Pune shed light on the challenges and opportunities for businesses in driving sustainable production and consumption, aligning with SDG 12. The speakers emphasized the importance of sustainable consumption, decentralized waste management, education, collaboration, and the role of various sectors in achieving these goals. The event provided valuable insights for both European and Indian companies, highlighting the need for data-driven decision-making, capacity building, and the integration of ESG principles and SDGs into business practices. The future trends discussed underscored the imperative of decoupling revenue growth from resource consumption and environmental degradation, signaling a path toward a more sustainable and circular economy.



Panel Discussion

From L to R : Simona Jadronova, Dr. Bharat Bhushan, Mandar Vaidya, Rijit Sengupta, Sandesh Salian, Dr. Gurudas Nulkar and Chetankumar Sangole

BREAKOUT SESSION

All the participants of the Pune event were divided into 4 groups for an activity on **developing collaborative ideas** involving various stakeholders for a Sustainable Future keeping SDG 12 in Maharashtra as the primary focus. These group members were randomly selected to enhance diversity in terms of industries. These ideas that the groups came up with will be further researched and some of them may even be transformed as proposals for a future project. The groups presented their ideas which are laid down below -

1. Food loss (production side) and waste (consumption side), focusing specifically on reducing food waste at home, in restaurants, canteen, etc.
 - Collaboration to stop wasting and bring it to where it is needed.
 - Businesses (supermarkets, restaurants) and civil society organisations (food banks) involved
 - Apps, data-sharing platforms, food banks
 - Challenges: availability of data and how to make it sustainable; food bank commitments don't meet the demand; education and awareness
 - Scope? Country, city, community level?
 - How to address food waste due to the shelf? Question of the food loss/retail side
2. Sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources
 - Achieving Euronorms carbon reduction and going beyond it; reduce the percentage of freshwater consumption
 - Potential partners: MCCI, IGCC, govt agencies such as the MPCB Pollution Control Board, IPs (property rights)
 - Challenges: costs and technology
 - Capped renewable energy use political will
3. Sustainable management and efficient use of resources as well as reducing waste generation through prevention, reduction, and recycling
 - Extending the life of products to reduce waste and use resources better + energy efficiency
 - Selling products as a service, otherwise manufacturers have no control over the product once sold
 - Cradle-to-cradle policy
 - Consumer-driven products, e.g. washing machines, AC
 - Potential partners: govt bodies (pollution control board) to set standards govt force required to create a level-playing field, since it won't happen voluntarily; banks
 - Supporting factors: general awareness of environmental issues; easy and available financing (large banks have committed to financing environmental projects; awareness about banks financing such projects needs to increase); government
4. Sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources
 - Reuse of water in agriculture + soil sustainability + farm production
 - Potential partners: farmers; chemical industries; composter providers; service providers; technology companies
 - How can it be used: drones (saving water by watering compared to manual watering); treating waste to improve soil conditions; honey population
 - Supporting factors: baseline survey on what is required

- Challenges: financing; technology



The event ended with closing remarks from IGCC and CRB with a promise to continue looking into the SDGs in India at regional levels.



Group Photo