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Minutes from the European Resources Forum 2016

Minutes by:

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DAY 2 – Thursday, 10 November 2016

Session C: Sustainable Resource Use along the Global Supply Chain

- **Marilyn Mehlmann** Head of development and training, Global Action Plan (GAP) International, Sweden
- **Dr. Fiona Solomon** CEO, Aluminium Stewardship Initiative, Australia
- **Ulrike Haupt** Head of Division, Environment, sustainable use of natural resources, marine conservation and biodiversity, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany
- **Chair: Dr. Harry Lehmann** General Director, Division Environmental Planning and Sustainability Strategies, German Environment Agency

Marilyn Mehlmann started the session by drawing the image of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as organs in a healthy body. They can be seen as a compass for building healthy circular economies. Just as in a living ecosystem where symbiosis and mutual benefits are key, a circular economy can see waste as a resource. Currently the planet is an unhealthy body with a fever and measures on a personal, community and global level are necessary for its health. The SDGs can serve as a checklist (and with 17 SDGs there are less than the 76 organs of the body) or as a compass by grouping them into N(ature with its planetary boundaries), S(ocial), E(conomic Stability) and W(ellbeing). Furthermore, two precepts that are shared by all religions can be added as a moral compass: do as you would be done by and do no harm. For a healthy planet and economy, we need honest Environmental Impact Assessments as well as partnerships and mutually beneficial relationships. Rather than procrastinating and talking, we need flexibility within the known boundaries and new learning platforms. For transformations of current systems, safe boundaries like a caterpillar cocoon are necessary for the new to emerge.

Dr. Fiona Solomon introduced the Aluminium Stewardship Initiative (ASI). Aluminium is the second most used metal after steel used e.g. in transport, construction and packaging. 75% of the scrap is reused through a circular economy model and can be back on the shelf within 6 weeks. The ASI consists of 36 members from associations, industry and civil society and aims at material stewardship by responsible sourcing and production. It provides guidance and manuals on the chain of custody standards. In a multi-stakeholder process, the ASI is working on an independent third party certification system. Voluntary sustainability standards are rather new and difficult in the mining area. At the beginning, the lack of common ground hindered cooperation, but then sector-based industry standards emerged with environmental and social objectives. It provides a common platform for due diligence and the standardization reduces costs. Such developments are especially important for conflicting minerals. Nowadays, sustainability and hu-

man rights are more included by companies: They are investing in it and rewarding it and improve their sustainability credentials with stakeholders.

Ulrike Haupt introduced the work of the division Environment, Sustainable Use of Natural Resources, Marine Conservation and Biodiversity of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Germany. In the context of the Earth Overshoot Day this year being two months earlier than 1993 and production shifts to countries with lower resource efficiency, the BMZ works, amongst others, on sustainable resource partnerships. The partner countries are part of the global supply chain e.g. by extraction of raw material, production or waste recycling. E.g. Germany supports African countries like Mali and Tanzania in sustainable extraction of raw material. Difficult are trade and conflict minerals where boycotting also means working against livelihoods that build on the mineral extraction. Other works of the BMZ are partnerships for sustainable textiles and Indo-German Environment Partnerships for sustainable production. Another burden the BMZ is working on reducing is e-waste management with 41.8 Mio tones of e-waste worldwide in 2014 increasing to 50 Mio tones in 2015. If growth is uncontrolled, this is a dangerous development. The BMZ started eWaste collection partnerships with Microsoft where 200 informal waste pickers were trained on e.g. burning problems and their income increase by 40%.

The **plenary discussion** started with a discussion on the government's role regarding the leverage of the global supply market. Ulrike Haupt explained the difficulties depending on the governance in the partner country. The BMZ approach is to work with training and advising of governments and companies. Dr. Fiona Solomon stated that under complex geopolitical circumstances it is difficult for voluntary initiatives to work and for scaling their work.

In reply to the questions on the option of reducing the absolute amounts of resource extraction or replacing Aluminium, Dr. Solomon answered that in the context of increasing population growth and rising standard of living, demands will continue to increase. In the assessment of the life cycle impact of materials, the footprint of production is considered (e.g. coal-based or renewable energies) as well as the longer life of food through packaging which contributes to a positive footprint. ASI welcomes those who are interested in being involved in the debate to find good solutions. Transformation is sector dependant as there are different drivers of transformation in each sector of the supply chain. And (recycling) things are getting complex: These days there are up to 125 elements in a light bulb whereas in the early days it consisted of four elements. Harry Lehmann pointed out that sufficiency is also part of the solution and Marilyn Mehlmann suggested looking for resources in e-waste as there is more gold per ton in e-waste than in the ground. The ASI standards are seen as progressive by the audience but is it a role model for the other 120 metals and minerals? Dr. Solomon answers that a periodic table of initiatives following with a stewardship is not expected. Just for gold and Aluminium there are very different drivers, people etc. and some are more some less interested for creating stewardships. The many benefits of metal (telecommunication etc.) and its functions in society need to be clearly and transparently communicated and reflection about the outcomes is necessary so that learning can take place.

Green washing of companies with support of e.g. the WWF and IUCN was further discussed. On the one side it is good that companies do something, however more serious work is required. Green washing is not accepted nor financed by the BMZ who checks their projects for this and encourages NGOs to alert them. Regarding due diligence requirements in partner counties, Ulrike Haupt points out the BMZ achievements: 15 years ago in many countries there was no communication between government, private sector and NGOs. This has changed and needs further training, networking and new types of instruments and discussion.

A complaint was raised in the audience that there is more talking than acting in the room and that many alternative resources exist: The discussion lacks non-negative effects, cradle-to-cradle solutions and a real green revolution without using up resource of other countries. Replying to this complaint, several NGOs in the audience report on their actions. A representative of

the Internal Alliance for Women who represents, amongst others, women associations in India with 2 Mio members, supports their work on the ground for sustainable consumption and production and against climate change and advocates their interest at UN meetings. (They have also been approached by and resisted green washing.)

Another part of the discussion evolved around the social entrepreneurship. Marilyn Mehlmann sees on the one hand hype around entrepreneurship because general jobs are diminishing, on the other hand very innovative products are developed. Dr. Solomon adds that for social investment it is difficult to get across different scales.

Marilyn Mehlmann concluded that radically different contexts need to enable us to break the bounds of what we cannot image: A sustainable society is something we cannot imagine. Direction guidelines are there and the path is emerging as we walk on it (how to do this is only well known in a spiritual context). One should always ask: how to do it better? And there is no need to compete; there is plenty of stuff to do in the world. Have fun while doing it!

Dr. Fiona Salomon's key message is on the organizing idea of sustainability. There is no right answer or obvious solution – we need to work in various ways and try to scale up. Coalitions are achieving something and if one sector starts, maybe others hop on. This is how organization has shown to work easiest. The state should set a long term agenda supporting self-regulation.

Ulrike Haupt concluded with the role of the government being of learning and financing good solutions. And that it is also about changing ourselves - everyone needs to change their consumption patterns.

Harry Lehmann finished the session by pointing out that one should think about services: to talk about drinking and mobility and not Aluminium and cars. This opens new ways of analyzing and ways where industries can work together. Currently we are stuck in silos but we need to broaden the view to analyze, broaden the network and don't hit but respect the first-movers.