



Welcoming speech Henny De Baets OESO Global Forum on Sustainable Materials Management

Monday 25 octobere 2010, LAMOT - Mechelen

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to welcome all of you to this OECD Global Forum on Environment, which the Public Waste Agency of Flanders is honoured to host.

I am pleased to see such a high level of participation. And I appreciate the fact that many of you have travelled long distances to be here today.

Clearly, this reflects the importance we all attach to the subject we will discuss over the next three days: sustainable materials management.

The shift towards sustainable materials management will require partnerships between and across governments, industries, sectors of society and state borders. We must act on many levels and with many partners. Therefore, I am happy to tell you that this Global Forum brings together more than 150 representatives of some 30 countries from all over the world, of international organisations, of the business community and of civil society.

The challenges before us are clear!

Our modern lifestyles are putting unprecedented pressure on our environment. The ecological footprint of the Flemish region, for instance, is four times higher than the regenerative capacity of our ecosystem.

The expansion in the global population will lead to an increased demand of products and services, thus leading to the depletion of our finite resource stocks. Depleting fish stocks, shrinking water reserves and deforestation are the harsh reality. If the world as a whole would adopt the current Western patterns of consumption, it is estimated that global resource use would quadruple within 20 years.

SMM can help us turn these challenges into opportunities and realise the shift to a sustainable economy with minimum impact on the environment and maximum well being for all. SMM is a means to enable us to live, produce and consume within our planet's ecological limits. SMM makes sense in every way: environmentally, economically, socially and geo-politically.

I would like to congratulate the OECD for its active part in advancing the SMM agenda internationally.

Flanders is top of the line in terms of waste recycling. More than 70% of our household waste is collected separately and recycled. However, we have reached the limits of traditional waste management policy. Waste generation and related environmental

impacts have stopped decreasing. Our high recycling figures are still increasing but at a slower pace.

At the Public Waste Agency of Flanders we have become sharply aware of the need to move beyond waste control. It is necessary to tackle the negative environmental impacts of the use of materials throughout their life cycles. The key to sustainable materials management is turning the linear cradle to grave approach into a circular cradle to cradle approach.

Let me tell you how we put SMM into practices now and in the years to come.

-We ensure that the waste streams of today become the resources of tomorrow.

-We promote sustainable consumption. We want to raise public awareness on SMM so as to boost the uptake of sustainable products by consumers. A greater demand in turn provides an incentive for companies to rethink their production processes and products. As a government agency we must set the example and green our procurement. We work together with retailers to enhance the offer of sustainable products on the shop shelves. We encourage companies to experiment with new business models based on life-cycle thinking, such as leasing concepts.

-We help businesses in developing eco-efficient production processes and ecologically designed products.

-We promote new forms of cooperation between actors in a materials chain. We bring raw materials providers, producers, retailers, consumers and waste managers together to join forces towards closing the loop.

-And finally we foster knowledge networks on SMM and create room for experiments in system innovation. Examples of such innovative pilot projects in response to the materials challenge are chemical leasing, enhanced landfill mining and industrial symbiosis.

The OVAM is eager to share its experience on materials management with the global community. Vice versa, we look forward to learning from like-minded pioneers elsewhere during this Global Forum.

SMM cannot just be a handy buzzword. We need a proper understanding of what each actor must do to make it happen. Therefore, I applaud the intention of this Global Forum to identify concrete steps to move towards SMM, aiming to bring materials use within the carrying capacity of our planet.

Belgium has seized its Presidency of the EU as a chance to put SMM on the European agenda. We aim at the adoption of Council Conclusions on SMM as key contribution to a resource efficient Europe by 2020. I am convinced that the outcome of this Global Forum will nourish the ongoing work of the Belgian Presidency.

I believe the importance of what will be discussed in the coming 3 days cannot be over-estimated.

I wish you all a fruitful meeting. I hope that the discussion will set the bar high for SMM initiatives around the world.