



Internationalizing Sustainable Lifestyles for Climate Justice

Integrating Sustainable Consumption in International Norms



COP29 Compass

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1. Introduction

Since the adoption of *Agenda 21*, an outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), there has been a focus at the global level on unsustainable patterns of production and consumption. In 2015, responsible consumption and production became the twelfth of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 12 seeks to advance responsible and sustainable consumption and production by encouraging the reduction of wasteful consumption, efficiency in production, and raising awareness while promoting responsible practices among governments, businesses, and consumers.

At the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow, the Prime Minister of India introduced a new initiative called Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE) in 2021. The concept behind LiFE is to promote an environmentally conscious lifestyle that emphasises ‘mindful and deliberate utilisation’ over ‘mindless and destructive consumption’ and advocates sustainable choices made by ‘Pro-Planet People’ (PMO, 2022). India’s updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) aim to put forward and further propagate a healthy and sustainable way of living based on traditions and values of conservation and moderation, including through a mass movement for LiFE as a key to combating climate change (GOI, 2022).

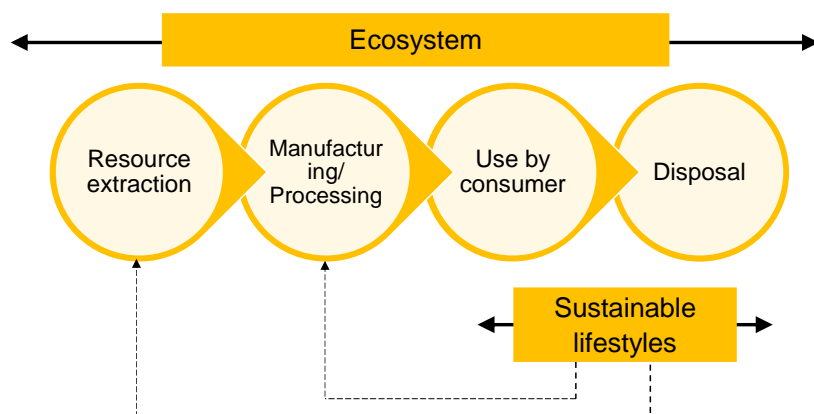
The Government of India notified the ‘Green Credit Programme Implementation Rules 2023’, as part of Mission LiFE. Thereafter, Prime Minister Modi launched the Green Credit Initiative at COP28. This programme will generate green credits from a variety of sectors and entities, ranging from small-scale ones such as individuals, farmer producer organisations, cooperatives, forestry enterprises, and sustainable agriculture enterprises to those developed at the level of urban and rural local bodies, the private sector, industries, and organisations (MOEFCC, 2023a). An outcome of India’s G20 Presidency is the G20 High-Level Principles on Lifestyles for Sustainable Development.

It is crucial to approach sustainable consumption and lifestyles by considering the resource value chains that include resource extraction, manufacturing, processing, use by consumers, and disposal (Figure 1). The resource value chain consists of two ends: upstream and downstream. The upstream segment includes resource extraction, while the downstream segment includes end-consumption and disposal. Cross-cutting aspects include design, transport, policy, and regulatory frameworks. Mainstream frameworks on sustainable consumption and production, including SDG 12, fail to holistically capture downstream segments of resource consumption and production systems. This is especially true for lifestyle choices, including their linking to upstream and midstream components (TERI 2022; Kedia *et al.* 2023).

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has emphasised that global emissions could be reduced by 40%-70% by 2050 through demand-side management, supported by infrastructure and technology, while meeting people’s basic needs (MOEFCC, 2023b). Energy has contributed the largest share of net global GHG emissions. According to the IPCC, the energy sector accounted for approximately 34% (20 GtCO₂-eq) of net global GHG emissions in 2019. Industry contributed 24% (14 GtCO₂-eq), transport contributed 15% (8.7 GtCO₂-eq),

buildings contributed 6% (3.3 GtCO₂-eq), and AFOLU (agriculture, forestry, and other land use) contributed 22% (13 GtCO₂-eq) of emissions (IPCC, 2022). According to the IEA's modelling, LiFE-compatible actions in the energy sector alone would reduce annual global carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions by more than 2 billion tonnes (Gt) in 2030, which is 20% of the emissions reductions needed by 2030 to put the world on a pathway to net-zero emissions (International Energy Agency, 2023). Global food production accounts for one-third of all anthropogenic GHG emissions, of which meat production is responsible for 60% (Milman, 2021).

Figure 1: Sustainable lifestyles and resource value chains



This policy brief seeks to develop composite metrics on consumption for G20 countries. It also discusses implications for climate justice and ways to internationalize sustainable lifestyles.





2. Metrics on Lifestyles and Consumption

To understand the state of lifestyles and consumption for G20 countries, the European Union and the African Union, a composite index and indices on consumption sectors (such as food, transport, residential, and waste management) have been developed. This builds on the methodology of TERI (2022, 2023). Table 1 summarises the indicators used in calculating the metrics for G20 countries, the European Union (EU), and the African Union (AU).

The choice of index is based on key sectors that have been extensively covered in the literature and contribute to sustainable consumption on the downstream or end-consumer side. The downstream side of production and consumption systems pertains to the lifestyles of consumers, while the upstream includes aspects related to resource extraction. The goal is to examine the demand side, which is essential for determining the production and consumption needs and patterns of the selected indicators.

The choice of these indicators is constrained by data availability. For example, food waste was not included in the analysis due to a lack of data in all G20 entities for all types of food waste (households, out-of-home consumption, and retail). Turkey, for instance, has no data available for food waste. The EU had no data on the out-of-home consumption category. As a result, we used data for plastic waste generation for 2010 as it was one of the few indicators available for G20 nations, except for the African Union (AU). For the AU, we averaged data from 31 African countries for which data was available. Population data was taken from the UN World Population Prospects (United Nations, 2022).

Table 1: Indicators and data sources used for developing metrics on sustainable consumption

Sector	Indicator	Data source	Data Year
Transport 	Total final energy consumption (TFEC) in the transport sector (TJ/capita)	IEA (2024)	2021
Food 	Meat supply (kilograms/year/capita)	FAO (2023)	2021
Residential buildings 	Total final energy consumption (TFEC) in the residential sector (TJ/capita)	IEA (2024)	2021
Waste disposal 	Plastic waste generation (tonnes/capita)	Jambeck <i>et al.</i> (2015)	2010

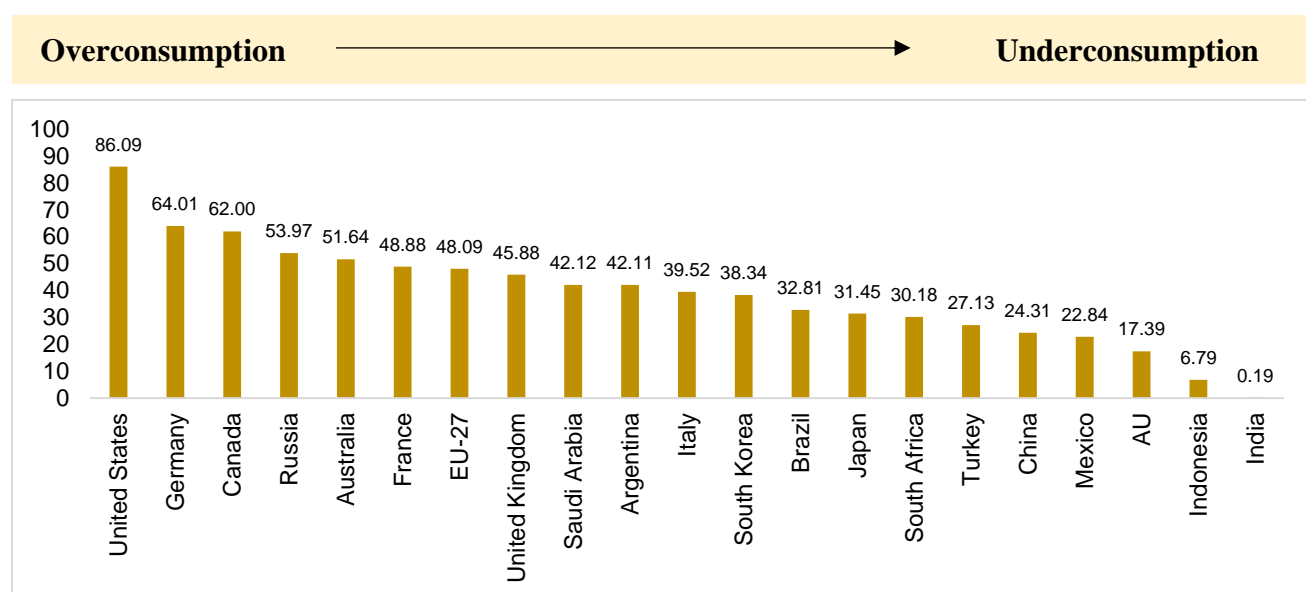
The formula for **normalisation** is used to scale data to the range of 0-1. This procedure makes the respective values of the selected indicators listed in Table 1 unitless, allowing for a fair comparison of indicators and also enabling the construction of a composite index. In the index, the highest consumer gets a value of 1, while the lowest consumer gets a value of 0. During this exercise, it is ensured that all values are unidirectional.

The normalisation procedure using x as a variable is as follows:

$$x_{norm} = \frac{x - x_{min}}{x_{max} - x_{min}}$$

x_{norm} is the normalised value of x and x_{min} and x_{max} are the lowest and highest values for the variable x . The scores received from each indicator are then averaged using equal weights.

After standardising the values, the scores were converted to arrive at scores proportionate to 100 and are depicted graphically in Figure 2. Higher scores indicate higher consumption in *per capita* terms for the country/grouping.

Figure 2: Consumption and lifestyles index for G20


Country	TFC in transport sector (TJ/capita/year)		TFC in residential sector (TJ/capita/year)		Meat consumption (kilograms/capita/year)		Plastic waste generation (tonnes/capita/year)		Composite index	Score
	Value	Index	Value	Index	Value	Index	Value	Index		
United States	0.08	1.00	0.03	0.77	126.83	1.00	0.12	0.68	0.86	86.09
Germany	0.03	0.32	0.03	0.65	76.59	0.59	0.18	1.00	0.64	64.01
Canada	0.06	0.82	0.04	0.82	86.85	0.67	0.03	0.17	0.62	62.00
Russia	0.03	0.35	0.04	1.00	78.36	0.60	0.04	0.21	0.54	53.97
Australia	0.05	0.63	0.02	0.36	110.15	0.86	0.04	0.21	0.52	51.64
France	0.03	0.34	0.03	0.56	86.05	0.66	0.07	0.39	0.49	48.88
EU-27	0.02	0.30	0.02	0.48	80.16	0.61	0.10	0.53	0.48	48.09
United Kingdom	0.02	0.27	0.02	0.51	82.26	0.63	0.08	0.42	0.46	45.88
Saudi Arabia	0.05	0.65	0.02	0.32	55.05	0.41	0.06	0.30	0.42	42.12
Argentina	0.02	0.18	0.01	0.24	115.49	0.91	0.07	0.36	0.42	42.11
Italy	0.02	0.30	0.02	0.46	74.31	0.57	0.05	0.26	0.40	39.52
South Korea	0.03	0.36	0.02	0.34	81.48	0.63	0.04	0.21	0.38	38.34
Brazil	0.02	0.19	0.01	0.03	98.84	0.77	0.06	0.32	0.33	32.81
Japan	0.02	0.25	0.01	0.25	57.17	0.42	0.06	0.33	0.31	31.45
South Africa	0.01	0.12	0.01	0.07	71.56	0.54	0.09	0.48	0.30	30.18
Turkey	0.01	0.16	0.01	0.19	43.03	0.31	0.08	0.42	0.27	27.13
China	0.01	0.10	0.01	0.18	62.74	0.47	0.04	0.23	0.24	24.31
Mexico	0.01	0.12	0.01	0.05	75.42	0.58	0.03	0.17	0.23	22.84
AU	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.15	17.78	0.10	0.08	0.43	0.17	17.39
Indonesia	0.01	0.07	0.00	0.00	18.55	0.11	0.02	0.10	0.07	6.79
India	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	5.69	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.19

Note: Numbers have been rounded off to two decimal places.

Value of 0.00 may imply that the value is between 0.001 and 0.009

Source: Based on IEA (2024), United Nations (2022), FAO (2023), and Jambeck et al. (2015)

In the Consumption and Lifestyles Index, the United States has the highest consumption among G20 entities, while India has the lowest consumption. The developing countries in the G20 have scored much lower than most of their developed counterparts.

It is important to mention that the scores presented here only indicate the present level of consumption. They are broadly indicative of overconsumption or underconsumption. The

above metrics are not perfect and are constrained by data availability, especially concerning consumption by individuals or households. This points to the need for robust statistical systems to collect consumer data. For climate justice and equity considerations, a fair level of consumption is key.

3. Implications of Consumption for Climate Justice

When considering sustainable lifestyles and climate justice, it is important to consider equitable consumption and underconsumption. Climate justice acknowledges that the world's richest countries, having been the largest contributors to climate change, bear a greater responsibility and obligation to take prompt and adequate actions. However, there are concerns that any international agreements made may exacerbate the unfair burden on poorer countries and vulnerable populations. It highlights that countries in the Global South face significant development challenges like poverty, socioeconomic inequities, and limited access to essential services. Hence, policies should address the specific needs of these countries to ensure that no one is left behind owing to climate action. This approach is crucial for the Global South's strategy in addressing the global climate crisis.

Development should strike a balance where people and/or countries can prosper while ensuring environmental sustainability and social equity. Looking through the lens of development as the starting point for addressing climate change for all countries highlights how it can either facilitate or hinder efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change (UNCTAD, 2009). Equity is a key aspect, as resources are limited and need to be shared fairly. Regardless of the actions of industrialized nations, developing countries face fallouts across development issues, along with the need to advance rapidly to meet emerging challenges. For developing countries, to prioritize emissions reduction over development when developed economies are unwilling to make substantial reductions in their own emissions is unjustifiable. The United States, historically the largest emitter globally, did not ratify the Kyoto Protocol.

Due to disparities in the global industrial chain, significant inequality in carbon emissions exists between different countries and regions. Regions like Asia Pacific, Africa, and the Middle East—where developing countries are the majority—emit much less carbon per-capita compared to developed countries. China, for instance, now leads in overall national emissions, surpassing the United States (as of 2022), but with a population four times larger, its *per capita* emissions rate is about 75% lower. Their high level of absolute emissions is largely because they rely on low-end manufacturing processes that produce high pollution, and accordingly, are unsustainable. This demonstrates how economic inequality has led to carbon inequality. In contrast, developed regions such as North America and Europe achieve green GDP growth by shifting high-carbon, low-value industries to developing countries, creating a "pollution paradise" effect (Wu *et al.*, 2024).

The inequitable structure of global consumption and emissions hampers sustainable development in developing countries and contradicts the principles of climate justice. To achieve climate justice, it is essential that the responsibility of reducing emissions by each country falls equitably based on each country's *per capita* as well as historical level of emissions. This will help overcome the embodied global carbon inequality by considering the

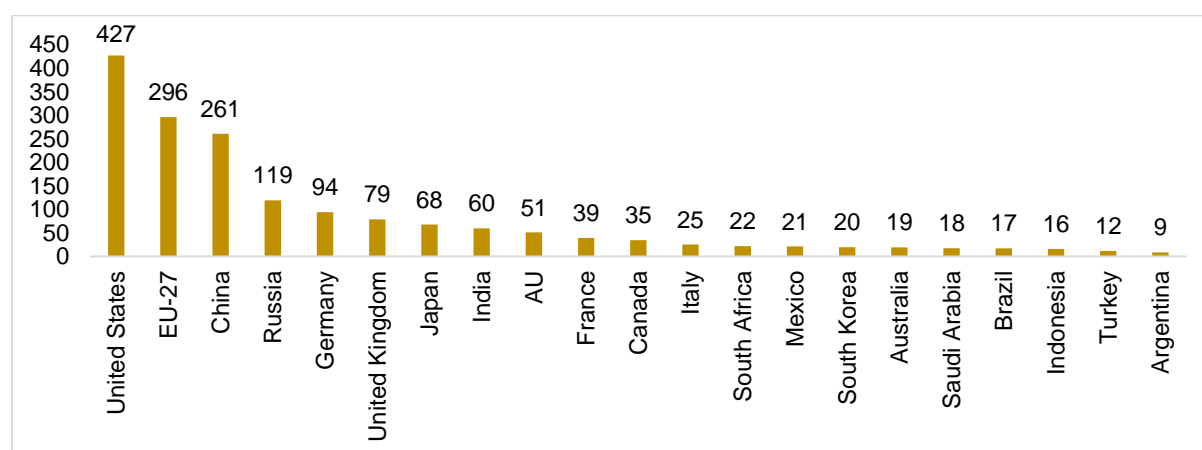
differences in carbon emissions reflected in their socio-economic characteristics, disparities, and driving factors of global carbon emissions.

Despite having less than 20% of the world's population, developed countries are responsible for about three-quarters (75%) of historical emissions (IMF, 2023). This significantly surpasses their fair share based on an equal per-person allocation. If future emission allowances are determined based on their past excessive level of emissions, it would increase their emissions disparity. A small, wealthy minority would continue to occupy an unfairly large share of the available space until 2050, depriving the poorer majority, who need resources for their development (UNFCCC, n.d.).

Using an equity principle based on a simple per-capita distribution, assumes that 'equal rights' means each person should be allowed to emit the same amount of greenhouse gases (Romanovskaya & Federici, 2019). Williges *et al* (2022) in their study argued that *per capita* emissions based on the Human Development Index (HDI) threshold can be used to set initial emission allowances for countries at or below the threshold level as their initial emission allowance based on current population, for the first year of budget allocation.

In terms of cumulative emissions, the United States, EU-27, and China, are responsible for over 55% of cumulative GHG emissions from 1850-22 (Figure 3). On the other hand, African Union (1 tonne per person), India (2 tonnes per person), and Brazil (2.2 tonne per person) have *per capita* CO₂ emissions much lower than the world average (4.7 tonne per person) (Figure 4). In 2022, *per capita* carbon emissions in India and the United States were 2 tonne per person and 14.9 tonne per person respectively (Figure 4).

Figure 3: Cumulative CO₂ emissions for G20 entities (billion tonnes), 1850–2022

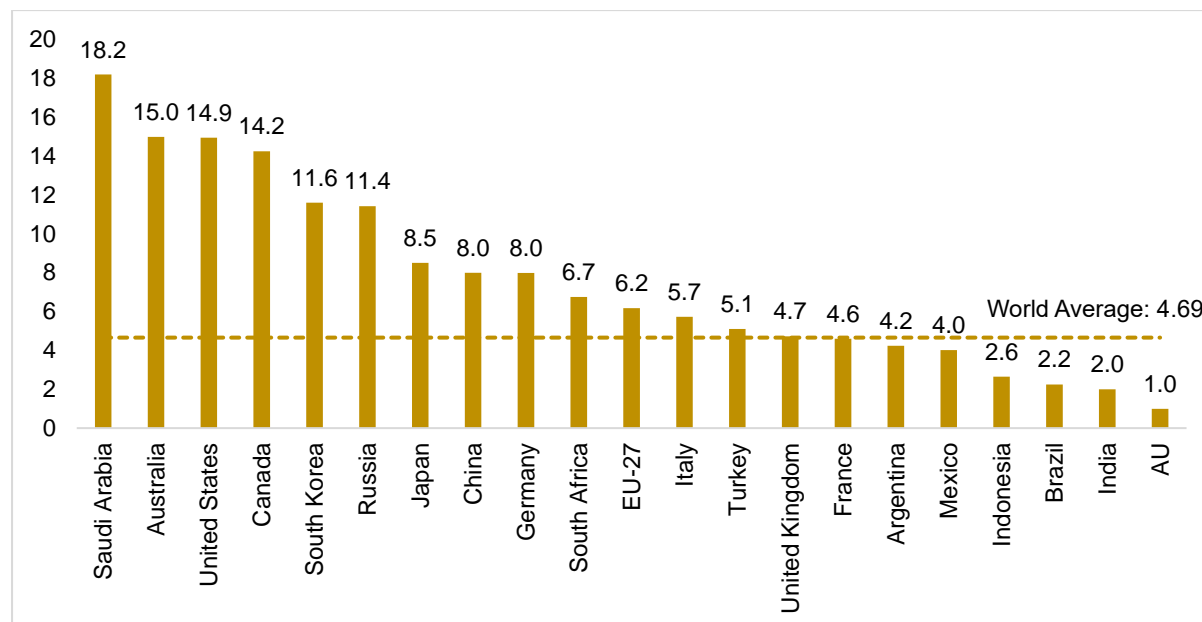


Source: *Our World in Data* (2024a)

Disparities exist among countries in terms of cumulative and *per capita* emissions. There are substantial differences in *per capita* climate debt across countries. For the period from 1959 to 2018, *per capita* cumulative emissions are highest in the United States—approximately six times that of China and twenty-five times that of India. Looking ahead to 2019–2035, cumulative *per capita* emissions will continue to be highest in the United States and are expected to increase in China, surpassing the expected levels in the European Union (UNFCCC, n.d.).

The lack of a universal equity doctrine and the diverse economic impacts of different equity principles across countries have made it challenging in climate negotiations to determine what is truly just and fair. A common benchmark range for permissible *per capita* emissions needs to be developed as a minimal level of *per capita* cumulative emission rights.

Figure 4: Per capita CO₂ emissions, 2022 (tonnes per person)



Source: *Our World in Data (2024b)*

4. Sustainable Lifestyles and Initiatives in India

According to Niti Aayog, harnessing the power of collective action led by individuals is crucial for solving complex problems, alongside policy and regulatory measures to address environmental issues (NITI, 2022). The rationale behind the LiFE movement in India includes three aspects: emphasis on mass movements (*Jan Andolans*), focus on growth fuelled by demand and consumer-driven innovations, and internationalizing lifestyles as an issue of global concern. Mission LiFE, in its pursuit of sustainability, advocates a comprehensive strategy marked by three pivotal fundamental shifts. These transformative changes encompass altering demand patterns, reshaping supply chains, and implementing progressive policy measures. Apart from the Central government, state governments are also taking steps to implement LiFE. The Andhra Pradesh government, for instance, has teamed up with the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) to advance the Mission LiFE initiative, which focuses on establishing new benchmarks for sustainable living and energy efficiency across the state (Raghavendra, 2024).

Further, two major initiatives were launched in India to accelerate the LiFE movement. The Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change launched the Green Credit Programme (GCP), and the Department of Consumer Affairs put forth a comprehensive framework for the Right to Repair. GCP aims to highlight the LiFE movement through sustainable consumption, and a framework for the Right to Repair in India shall empower consumers and buyers in the regional/local market.

The **Green Credit Rules, 2023**—notified on 12 October 2023—aim to establish a market-driven mechanism that will incentivize voluntary environmental measures across diverse sectors by different stakeholders, including individuals, communities, businesses, private sector industries, farmer producer organisations (FPOs), and cooperatives. The initiative will create tradeable green credits that can be traded on domestic market platforms. It would enable businesses and manufacturers to earn additional revenue. The measures covered under Green Credit Rules include tree plantation, water management, sustainable agriculture, waste management, air pollution reduction, mangrove conservation and restoration, Ecomark label development, and sustainable buildings and infrastructure (MOEFCC, 2023a).

To boost the GCP initiative, the capital markets regulator SEBI has suggested that listed companies should disclose information about the GCP as part of the Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting (BRSR) framework. These Green Credits can be earned by a listed company and its value chain partners through tree plantations on waste or degraded lands and river catchment areas (PTI, 2024). Presently, the focus of GCP is on tree plantation activities on degraded lands.

Green Credits are meant to act as an incentive for entities involved in tree planting, following methodologies and guidelines set by the Administrator. The GCP also leverages digital tools, such as a web platform and registry, to facilitate the smooth registration, verification, and monitoring of plantation activities. The inventorisation process involves the registration of degraded forest lands by Forest Departments. The inventory thus formed becomes a valuable resource available for voluntary plantation activities. GCP encourages government institutions, public sector undertakings, non-governmental organisations, private companies, philanthropies, and individuals, including groups registered under the Societies Registration Act, to select Plantation Blocks from the registered options to promote afforestation. According to the registry, 877 land parcels of degraded land have been approved under the Green Credit Programme as of 14 August 2024 (MOEFCC, 2024). Of the land parcels for which data was available, the land parcel area size ranges from 5 hectares to 200 hectares.

The **Ecomark scheme** of the government employs ecolabelling to nudge individuals. The Ecomark scheme serves as a social instrument that allows consumers to filter out products and choose those with environmentally friendly designs and manufacturing processes. The Central Pollution Control Board administers the scheme in conjunction with the Bureau of Indian Standards. The GCP also has a component of Ecomark-based Green Credit to encourage manufacturers to obtain the label for their goods and services. An efficient amalgamation of market instruments and information instruments can help achieve the desired objectives of sustainable lifestyles.

The framework for the **Right to Repair** was introduced by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs with the aim of empowering consumers. As per the framework, manufacturers must provide customers with product details so that they can choose to get them repaired by third parties if needed. The aim is to empower consumers by giving them access to information about the products they own, to get them modified or repaired at reasonable costs, and prevent them from being exploited by manufacturers. The provisions of the Right to Repair will significantly reduce the generation of e-waste and amplify the concept of reuse and recycling, an important

component of the LiFE movement. It will also boost opportunities for small repair shops, which is crucial for local economies (MOCAFPD, 2023). A portal for the Right to Repair is also in place, but integrating manufacturers into the scheme will take time. However, the government has been taking steps to make the scheme efficient. It has urged automobile companies to join the unified Right to Repair Portal India (Indian Express, 2024).

These schemes and provisions act as market, social, and information instruments that incentivize or nudge individuals, both consumers and manufacturers, to pursue environment-friendly work ethics and lifestyles. While the provisions of the policies are to ensure sustainable development, these require backing by transparent monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and creating a strong will among individuals to undertake these principles of sustainable lifestyles.

5. Internationalizing Lifestyles for Sustainable Development

Internationalization is crucial to building shared expectations about what constitutes appropriate behaviour among governments and non-state actors in international systems. Even though based on non-binding frameworks, these norms can lead to cascading effects and policy changes within and across countries and stakeholders. From a Global South perspective, the COP26 Charter of Actions advocated that India should be a normative leader in sustainable lifestyles and climate justice (TERI, 2021).

Internationalizing through G20

India sought to internationalize LiFE under its G20 Presidency in 2023, where LiFE emerged as an important topic of G20 discussions. Section C of the Declaration focuses on the Green Development Pact for a Sustainable Future and emphasises Mainstreaming Lifestyles for Sustainable Development (LiFE) (G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration, 2023). The discussion also recognised the need for 'Designing a Circular Economy World' to reduce waste generation and promote a circular economy, an important component of Mission LiFE.

India's G20 legacy also included the African Union finding its place as a permanent member of the G20 (G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration, 2023). In addition, the Green Development Pact recognises the varying needs of countries, particularly developing nations, while pursuing development, environmental, and climate goals. It also promotes the Lifestyles for Sustainable Development approach (G20 High-Level Principles on Lifestyles for Sustainable Development, 2023).

During the G20 deliberations in India, one of the key outcomes was the formulation of the nine G20 High-Level Principles on Lifestyles for Sustainable Development, which are summarised in Box 1. Sustainable lifestyles are also seen as a way to connect climate action and sustainable development. The Lifestyles for Sustainable Development approach takes forward the idea of Green Development for 'One Earth, One Family, One Future'.

Box 1: The Nine G20 High-Level Principles on Lifestyles for Sustainable Development

- Interlinkages between development, environment, and climate agendas
- International and national efforts towards meeting the basic needs of all
- Behavioural sciences approaches
- Promote sustainable production
- Mainstream sustainability of the economy
- Responsibly leverage the potential of data and digital technology
- Role of local communities, governments, and traditional knowledge
- Role of financing
- International cooperation and collective action

Source: Based on G20 High-Level Principles on Lifestyles for Sustainable Development (2023)

Although the Brazilian Presidency for the G20 in 2024 has not yet outrightly spoken on sustainable lifestyles, their commitment to the circular economy and linking economic growth with sustainable development reflects their dedication to furthering the agenda of sustainable lifestyles set under India's G20 Presidency. The Brazilian Presidency has also placed a strong emphasis on promoting sustainable production and consumption, and the circular economy. These initiatives align with Brazil's G20 presidency motto of “building a just world and a sustainable planet,” highlighting the interconnectedness of economic growth, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion.

The circular economy has been a key focus area during Brazil's G20 presidency. Brazil proposed thematic areas for the G20 Environment and Climate Sustainability Working Group, including preventive and emergency adaptation to climate events, payments for ecosystem services, ocean conservation, and waste management within a circular economy framework. These discussions aim to integrate the circular economy into broader sustainable development goals, enhancing resource efficiency, and reducing environmental impacts. The recommendations for G20 governments emphasize the need to support demand for circular economy products and services, ensure transparency across global supply chains, and facilitate financing for establishing circular supply chains (G20, 2024).

Internationalizing through UNEA

The recent sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6), held from February 26 to March 1, 2024, in Nairobi, adopted Resolution 6/8 on ‘Promoting Sustainable Lifestyles’. It was submitted by India and co-sponsored by Sri Lanka and Bolivia. This resolution emphasises the global need to integrate sustainable practices into daily life and underlines the necessity of fostering sustainable lifestyles at individual, community, and national levels.

UNEP/EA.6/Res.8 reaffirms the commitments of the 2030 Agenda, particularly ensuring that individuals acquire the knowledge and skills required to promote sustainable development and

make informed lifestyle choices in harmony with nature. UNEA encourages collaboration across sectors and fosters public-private partnerships to enhance education and promote the sharing of information and best practices.

It also calls on UNEP to assist member states in developing action plans and facilitate the exchange of knowledge through programmes like the One Planet Network Programme on Sustainable Lifestyles and Education and the Green Jobs for Youth Pact, subject to ‘available resources’. Additionally, the resolution requests the Executive Director, in partnership with UN regional commissions, to hold regional dialogues—also subject to the ‘availability of resources’—to discuss sustainable lifestyle practices within diverse cultural contexts and report on the dialogues and progress at the next UNEA session (UNEP, 2024).

This resolution on sustainable lifestyles is a significant milestone, as it elevates the concept to a global level, bringing international attention to initiatives like Mission LiFE. However, despite this achievement, the resolution falls short on substantive commitments, making it weaker than it appears on the surface.

One weak area of the Resolution is its vagueness and lack of binding commitments and specificity. While it encourages member states and stakeholders to promote sustainable lifestyles and engage in education and awareness initiatives, it falls short of mandating specific actions or setting clear targets and timelines, leaving implementation largely up to individual member states. It is also unclear where the resources for the envisaged actions will be generated.

It also inadequately addresses global inequalities. While the Resolution acknowledges poverty eradication as crucial, it does not propose concrete and monitored measures to ensure that sustainable lifestyles are accessible to all, regardless of their economic, social, or political status, thereby risking the reinforcement of existing inequalities. The Resolution's dependence on voluntary cooperation among stakeholders lacks strong accountability mechanisms. Moreover, although the resolutions encourage international cooperation and support, the actual mobilisation of resources and technology transfer remains a significant challenge. The resolution is dependent on the availability of resources but lacks clear guidelines on how those resources will be secured or allocated.

The resolution is a critical step forward in global environmental governance, addressing key issues related to sustainable lifestyles and consumption. However, it needs to be supported by clarity on mandates for implementation strategies, the ability to mobilise resources, and the integration of socio-economic considerations into sustainability efforts. Looking ahead, UNEA could bring in stronger and more monitorable mandates.

Internationalizing through Climate Processes

India has sent a strong signal about its commitment to tackling climate change, with the Prime Minister announcing the LiFE movement at COP26 and including LiFE in its updated NDCs. In recent times, the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has been addressing various important issue-based topics. In addition to the usual subjects of adaptation,

loss and damage, mitigation, technology transfer, global stocktake, and other mechanisms as mandated by the Paris Agreement, SBSTA has deliberated on issues such as ‘just transitions’ along with ‘agriculture and food security’. As other issues have been discussed under the ambit of the UNFCCC, India can take the lead in garnering support for sustainable lifestyles in the UNFCCC processes.

Aligning with the objectives stated under Article 2 of the UNFCCC, sustainable lifestyles and responsible consumption are crucial in achieving the stabilisation of greenhouse gas concentrations and preventing dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. These issues directly relate to the Convention’s objective of allowing ecosystems to adapt naturally, safeguarding food production, and promoting sustainable economic development (United Nations, 1992). The Paris Agreement explicitly mentions the importance of sustainable lifestyles and patterns of consumption and production, with developed countries taking the lead (UNFCCC, 2015). The issue of sustainable lifestyles is key to achieving the objective stated under Article 2 of the Paris Agreement, which aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change in the context of sustainable development (UNFCCC, 2015). Sustainable lifestyles can contribute to both mitigation and adaptation.

The G20 High-Level Principles on Lifestyles for Sustainable Development can be further internationalized by bringing forth deliberations on sustainable lifestyles and responsible consumption in UNFCCC processes, including the CMA (Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement) and SBSTA. This can further internationalize sustainable lifestyles and responsible consumption, elevating the issue as a global priority to promote both adaptation and mitigation behaviours, which can then percolate to countries and sub-national initiatives. Furthermore, countries can also call for a special report by the IPCC on lifestyles and climate change.

Internationalizing LiFE through the UN General Assembly and SDG Processes

An analysis of United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolutions post the adoption of Agenda 2030 reveals that there are only four resolutions that relate to sustainable consumption, and they do not articulate the need for measures for sustainability beyond awareness-raising (Table 2).

It is suggested that India may put forward a draft resolution on lifestyles for sustainable development with more concrete mandates. India, as the principal sponsor, can interact with the member states to understand the respective policies in those countries and then articulate areas of convergence and further institutionalisation.

India should ensure the inclusion of ‘lifestyles for sustainable development’ in future UNGA resolutions on sustainable consumption and production. In addition, India may consider putting forward a draft resolution drawing from the G20 and its principles.

Table 2: Resolutions related to sustainable consumption in UNGA

#	Resolution	Discussion	Articulation of Lifestyles
1.	Promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, building on Agenda 21 (A/RES/75/213) - 29 Dec 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for policies and frameworks to enhance resource efficiency • Reduce, reuse, and recycle plastics • Enhance scientific and technological capacities in developing countries • Strengthen science-policy connections and global partnerships 	No
2.	Promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, building on Agenda 2 (A/RES/76/202) - 5 January 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential of digital technologies • Fundamental changes in production and consumption towards sustainable economic models, improved resource efficiency, and waste reduction. • Private sector's role in overcoming resource efficiency challenges 	No
3.	Promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, building on Agenda 21 (A/RES/77/162) - 20 Dec 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrating sustainable consumption and production into inclusive recovery strategies • Awareness on lifestyles • Shift to sustainable economic models and practices • Support for a legally binding instrument on plastic pollution • Strengthening scientific and technological capacities to promote reuse, recycling, and minimised waste and emissions 	No
4.	Promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, building on Agenda 21 (A/RES/78/151) - 21 Dec 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of sustainable models • Support for developing countries to enhance their scientific and technological capacities • Role of local zero-waste initiatives • Cost-efficiency of sustainable practices • Action across the plastic life cycle and waste management 	No

Before submitting the ‘best version possible’, India, as the principal sponsor, could interact with Member States for informal negotiations on a text to enable action as soon as the L-document is presented in the UNGA Plenary. Following the presentation of the L-document, unofficial negotiations are conducted under the direction of the principal sponsor, or a facilitator chosen by the Chair of the second committee. The negotiated text will replace the original draft if consensus is obtained. This resolution could further internationalize G20 High-Level Principles on Lifestyles for Sustainable Development and could be integral to combating climate change and achieving the SDGs. In addition, India can mobilise support for mandating a UNSG report on sustainable lifestyles, which could focus on incentivising individual and institutional behaviours. Understanding what constitutes a good quality of life and how resources are allocated globally is crucial for promoting sustainable lifestyles.

The emerging discourse on sustainable consumption highlights the need for a comprehensive and holistic approach towards consumer lifestyles. Downstream aspects in sustainability provide a more holistic resource management wherein the consumption impact of the entire lifecycle of products and ecosystems (from extraction to disposal) is taken into account, leading to more efficient use of resources. It is crucial to consider the social and humanistic dimensions of production and consumption patterns in lifestyles.

In the United Nations' global indicator framework on sustainable development goals (SDGs), for targets 4.7, 12.8, and 13.3, the indicator to track progress is the "Extent to which (i) global citizenship education, and (ii) education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in (a) national education policies; (b) curricula; (c) teacher education; and (d) student assessment" (United Nations, 2023). Thus, the indicators for these targets under Goal 4, Goal 12, and Goal 13 are linked to the formal education systems. While these are essential components, they do not encompass the entirety of measures needed to promote sustainable lifestyles and responsible consumption. India can take a leadership role, and these recommendations can be proposed by India's focal points under the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs), which has been conducting a Comprehensive Review of the global indicator framework throughout 2024 (United Nations General Assembly, 2017) to submit its proposed refinements, revisions, replacements, additions, and deletions to the 56th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission in March 2025 for its consideration (United Nations Statistical Commission, 2023).

6. The Road Ahead

Internationalizing lifestyles and promoting normative shifts: International norms and institutions need to change through global efforts that can be supported by all relevant actors within countries and internationally. India can further seek to internationalize the G20 High-Level Principles on Lifestyles for Sustainable Development through multilateral processes around the UNFCCC, UNGA, and SDG processes.

Strengthening global data and indicator frameworks: SDG 12 indicators can include more downstream indicators—especially for consumers and individuals—along with instruments such as eco-labels. There should be a strong policy mandate internationally to strengthen data reporting on individual and household consumption nationally and internationally. This will be an important step forward in internationalizing lifestyles.

Promoting adaptation and mitigation behaviours: From a Global South perspective, when discussing lifestyles, climate change adaptation and mitigation need to be considered. Under the UNFCCC, the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) can be mandated to produce technical reports on adaptation and mitigation lifestyles.

Deploying a variety of instruments: There is a need to examine the scope of deployment of all types of instruments, ranging from command and control to voluntary instruments. The role of responsible advertising is essential, and this is a segment that remains untapped. In this paper, we saw India introducing market instruments and rights-based approaches.

Data for promoting science-based actions: Consumption data and its availability in the public domain are critical. Metrics need to consider a complete system analysis when assessing the lifecycle implications of products and services. When examining GHG emissions or water use in food items, there is a need to consider energy and water consumption in irrigation, fertiliser production, and other inputs as well.

Deriving inspiration from indigenous communities: Indigenous communities are known to live in sync with nature in a way that does not harm the environment. Traditional knowledge is important to preserve, as it may inspire behavioural changes and provide insights.

Service-driven LiFE economy: Consumers need services apart from products, which implies that policies should aim to provide well-functioning and accessible public services and enable market conditions. For example, for mobility, policy instruments may be accompanied by certain business models, such as ride-sharing. This forms a fundamental basis for the Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE) economy. Green public procurement can be vital to driving a LiFE economy.

Increasing the life of existing products: Retrofitting and supporting technologies should be explored to consider affordability and minimise waste generation. In the mobility sector, we talk about the scrapping of older vehicles, but unfortunately, we talk very little about retrofitting technologies and increasing the life of vehicles.

Revisiting and improvising policies to address wasteful consumption: There is a need to revisit aspects of policies that promote unsustainable consumption, such as electricity subsidies that promote indiscriminate exploitation of groundwater. There is a need to better understand what wasteful consumption is and how it is further promoted by existing policies.

Encouraging participation of people and democratic processes: The philosophy behind LiFE is that climate change must now become a movement of the masses. Stakeholders must actively think of ways in which we nudge citizens towards climate-friendly practices. Citizen science can be promoted, and citizens can be involved in data collection. Data should also be made available in the public domain through robust digital public infrastructure. This will also strengthen citizen and civil society-based democratic processes.

Driving demand-responsive innovations: India has global relevance, not only because of the size of the country's population but also due to innovations it can develop and adopt at individual and industry levels. For growth and development, it is essential to encourage agility in entrepreneurs who can shift more quickly to market demand. Thus, demand (downstream) driving innovations (upstream) is also crucial.

Sustainable consumption and food systems: The global shift towards sustainable lifestyles is especially crucial in food systems. In India, where many farmers are small and marginal, the LiFE movement highlights healthy lifestyles, organic food production, local food consumption, biodiversity conservation, and composting. Discouraging monoculture and improving food

waste management are vital. Policy support must be strengthened for both post-harvest and consumption-based food waste.

Addressing unsustainability in fast fashion: The fashion industry, especially fast fashion, is a major polluter, particularly in water use. Addressing unsustainable practices in the fashion sector is essential as the world faces increasing resource and water stress. Reforms in the fashion industry can significantly reduce its ecological footprint and contribute to global sustainability efforts.

Incorporating systems thinking: The global narrative on sustainable consumption began with pollution control, moved to cleaner production, and evolved into industrial ecology and the circular economy, using systems-based approaches.

Localising sustainable consumption approaches and frugality: It is crucial not to follow Western consumption models blindly. Instead, a thoughtful, localised approach that ensures climate justice and regional equity is necessary. Reducing consumption should promote sustainability without compromising basic needs. Frugal innovations and circularity are key to achieving sustainability in urbanising countries like India.

LiFE Economy: To promote sustainable lifestyles, there is a need for systemic transformation, and this is where the concept of a LiFE Economy becomes crucial. Consumption is not a stand-alone issue; it is deeply linked with poverty, inequality, and the global economic order. Disparities are significant both between and within countries.

Going beyond GDP: There is a need to measure well-being beyond gross domestic product (GDP). Ethical value systems must also be mainstreamed in all spheres to support this transformation.

Addressing overconsumption and underconsumption is crucial for climate justice: Countries with high consumption rates bear a greater responsibility, based on principles like Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities, to mitigate their environmental impact. Supporting sustainable development in nations with lower consumption levels is key, and India's global leadership in advocating these values is essential. There is a need for a benchmark for overconsumption and underconsumption.

Through the G20 presidency, India took a huge leap forward in internationalizing sustainable lifestyles. India is well poised to take a leadership role in internationalizing lifestyles for the environment. A critical mass of support from various stakeholders is required for norms and institutions to change. Internationalization can play a key role here. Participatory and inclusive processes, along with evidence- and data-driven approaches, including in multilateral processes, can lead to shifts in international norms, policies, and practices worldwide.

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World Sustainable Development Summit

The World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) is the annual flagship multistakeholder convening organized by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). Established in 2001, the Summit has a legacy of over two decades in advancing 'sustainable development' as a globally shared goal. As the only independently convened international summit on sustainable development and the environment based in the Global South, WSDS strives to provide long-term solutions that benefit global communities by bringing together the world's most enlightened leaders and thinkers on a single platform. Over the years, the Summit has hosted 54 Heads of State and Government, 103 Ministers, 13 Nobel Laureates, 1,888 Business Leaders, 2,745 Speakers, and 38,280 Delegates.

Act4Earth

Act4Earth initiative was launched at the valedictory session of WSDS 2022. Building on the discussions of WSDS, this initiative seeks to continuously engage with stakeholders through research and dialogue. Act4Earth initiative has two components: **COP Compass** and **SDG Charter**. The COP Compass seeks to inspire and mobilize leadership at all levels for inclusive transitions through ambitious and informed policies and measures, enabling paradigm shifts towards meeting the UNFCCC and Paris goals through mitigation, adaptation, and means of implementation. The SDG Charter seeks to identify gaps and suggest ways for strengthening and mainstreaming sustainable development in policy agendas for enhanced environmental, social, and economic outcomes.

Internationalizing Lifestyles for Sustainable Development

Mainstream frameworks on sustainable consumption and production fail to holistically capture downstream segments of resource consumption and production systems, especially in relation to lifestyle choices. Building on previous work by TERI, this policy brief seeks to develop composite metrics on consumption for G20 countries and discusses ways to further internationalize sustainable lifestyles. Drawing from the G20 High-Level Principles and Resolution 6/8 of the United Nations Environment Assembly, India can further internationalize Lifestyles for Sustainable Development through the multilateral processes of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations General Assembly. The paper calls for balancing overconsumption and underconsumption to ensure climate justice, emphasizing that India's global leadership in advocating for these values is essential. It also suggests a roadmap for promoting sustainable lifestyles based on analysis and stakeholder consultation.

Keywords

sustainable lifestyles, sustainable consumption, climate justice, internationalization, norms, sustainable development, SDG 12, LiFEStyle for Environment (LiFE)



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