

Workshop on Material Flows and Environmental Impacts associated with Massive
Consumption of Natural Resources and Products
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**International Panel on Natural Resources – Addressing the need to
decouple economic growth from environmental impacts related to the
extraction and use of natural resources**

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Abstract

The European Commission's Thematic Strategy on the sustainable use of natural resources is addressing the need to decouple economic growth from environmental impacts related to the extraction and use of natural resources. Due to the international dimension, in particular trade related impacts and the common but differentiated responsibilities of developing and rapidly industrializing countries, any strategy in this area need to be built upon solid scientific state-of-the-art knowledge involving all relevant expertise. This is why the European Commission has taken the initiative to develop an international scientific panel based on initial ideas provided by UNEP.

The objective of the panel whose secretariat will be hosted by UNEP is to provide independent scientific advice to the EU, national governments and relevant international organizations on the key environmental impacts of the extraction and use of natural resources in a life cycle perspective, and on strategies and approaches to reduce these impacts in growing economies, in particular through changing unsustainable patterns of sustainable consumption and production. An important element of the work of the panel will be to provide scientific advice and support for the enhancement of knowledge and for capacity building in developing countries.

To this end the panel will carry out the following key tasks, in close co-operation with and supported by national and international centers of excellence: (1) Assess and monitor progress on decoupling on an international level; (2) Analyze and advise on policy instruments to promote decoupling; (3) Initiate and facilitate transfer of knowledge and capacity building for developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

A general outline will be presented about the future organization of the work process, taking into account the aim of global participation and focus on well defined deliverables.