

Mr Morley's opening address to the 1st Meeting of Marrakech Task Force on Sustainable Products - London 4 November 2005

It seems to me that Product Policy, in all its forms, is becoming more central to our thinking on Sustainable Development. Whatever vision we each have of the future, and whatever our own immediate national policy imperatives, whether these are economic, social or environmental, the route forward will involve a process of innovation and change – not least in the design of the goods and services that we make, buy, use and throw away.

We need our industries, both large and small, to help us to shape and to deliver our policy visions.

Industry, on the other hand, needs a degree of certainty and stability to justify investment in innovation and to bring forward new, more sustainable products. .

The wild-card, as ever, is the consumer who demands more and more goods and services - not only to provide the basics of life, such as heat and light - but to achieve a better quality of life through more electrically-powered appliances, TVs, telephones and the Internet, for example.

The encouraging signs are that consumers, wherever they are, are becoming more aware of the link between the things they buy, use and throw away – and with their own existence, quality of life and hopes for the future. That awareness is coming with exposure to problems such as the cost and security of energy and water supplies, through concerns about health and pollution, and through discussion of the linkages between human activity and natural disasters.

This interdependency, between government policy, industrial innovation, and consumer lifestyles, coupled with increasing globalisation of production, supply chains and markets - all means that **more international co-operation** is both helpful and, in some areas, necessary, if we are to achieve our separate and collective policy objectives.

Governments have already established a broad consensus on the way forward, giving the green light for action. Most recently, the conclusions from 3Rs in Japan and the G8 Summit in Gleneagles call for **more international co-operation** to encourage more resource efficient goods and services, to set standards and to raise benchmarks. This is all absolutely in line with the thinking behind the Marrakech Process. That calls for 10 year programmes at local, regional and global levels to encourage movement towards more sustainable consumption and production - and for the establishment of Task Forces, such as this one, to develop and take forward practical actions.

For Products, I believe this means

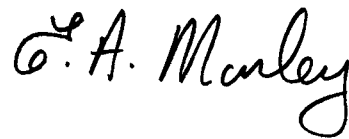
- Building a common appreciation of market and technological trends, and of the risks and opportunities these present for sustainable development.
- Being clear about which energy, environmental and wider sustainability issues most concern us, where more innovation is needed over at least the next 10 to 20 years and what levels of performance for goods and services, will be unacceptable in the future.
- Improving consumer awareness of the issues and raising expectations that goods and services should not only be fit for purpose and safe but also should meet minimum standards of sustainability.
- Developing coherent and effective policy measures and working at local, regional and global levels to support innovation, competition and market building for improved goods and services.
- Helping developing countries to 'leapfrog' development cycles through policies which ensure that they obtain, from the outset, the most resource-efficient and, importantly, the most appropriate products.
- Acknowledging our power and responsibility to take action, through our own procurement and product supply chain policies, to help improve sustainability

in remote locations where the things are made, especially in developing countries.

- Ensuring the structures and mechanisms are in place for effective networking, the sharing of expertise and experience and co-operative policy development.

I am particularly pleased that the commitments that all our governments have made towards sustainable consumption and production are now being brought into focus. It is important that we can agree not only the vision, but also how to move forward with practical actions that will meet the needs of people in both developed and developing countries.

I invite you today, as enthusiasts for this agenda, to focus on these and on other positive actions to encourage more international co-operation to deliver the sustainable products we all need.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "E. A. Morley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "E".

ELLIOT MORLEY