



70th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

DIGITAL AND GREEN TRANSFORMATIONS
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
IN THE REGION OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
VIRTUAL SIDE EVENTS | 3 - 5 APRIL 2023

PROMOTING CIRCULAR ECONOMY AND THE SUSTAINABLE USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Side events leading up to the Seventieth session of the Commission

Monday, 3 April 2023

09:15 a.m. – 04:30 p.m. (CEST)

Outline and objective:

A circular economy is an economic system designed to eliminate waste and promote the continuous use of resources. Instead of the traditional linear model, which involves extracting resources, producing goods, and then disposing of them, a circular economy involves keeping resources in use for as long as possible, extracting the maximum value from them, and then recovering and regenerating materials at the end of their life cycle.

Transitioning to a circular economy is necessary for a number of reasons. First, it is essential for addressing the growing problem of resource scarcity. As the global population grows and demand for resources increases, traditional linear models of production and consumption become increasingly unsustainable. By transitioning to a circular economy, we can reduce our reliance on finite resources and minimize waste.

Second, a circular economy can help to reduce environmental damage and mitigate the effects of climate change. The extraction, production, and disposal of goods can generate significant amounts of greenhouse gas emissions and other forms of pollution. By keeping resources in use for as long as possible and recovering materials, we can reduce these emissions and minimize our impact on the environment.

Finally, a circular economy can generate significant economic benefits. By reducing waste and maximizing the value of resources, businesses can create new revenue streams that save money, increase employment and drive innovation.

Transitioning to a circular economy is essential for creating a more sustainable, equitable, and prosperous future for all. To be successful, it requires a high degree of coordination between policymakers, businesses, and consumers. Policymakers can play a key role in creating the regulatory frameworks and incentives needed to drive the circular transition. Businesses can adopt circular business models and invest in new technologies and infrastructure to support the transition. Consumers can also play a role by adopting circular consumption habits, such as repairing and repurposing products rather than disposing of them.

Day 1 of side events will focus on different ways to accelerate the transition to a circular economy and promote the sustainable use of natural resources, from policies to business practices to consumer behaviors. Specifically, objectives include:

- To flag the relevance of the circular economy in the UNECE region, review progress made, and chart the way forward.
- To look at how to shape policies and institutions for the circular transition.



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- To respond to opportunities that innovation and the private sector offer in the circular transition.
- To discuss how to best enable circular consumption choices.
- To explore partnerships that may help accelerate the circular transition through cross-sectoral collaboration among stakeholders and learn from country experiences.

Speakers and audience will include representatives from UNECE member States, UN entities, the private sector, NGOs, and academia, among others.

Format and language:

The meeting will be held in five virtual sessions in one day and convened via the Zoom platform. Interpretation will be available in English, French and Russian.

After the high-level opening session, the following side-events would gather 3-5 panellists and consist of an interactive discussion, moderated by the panel chair, and a Q&A session. The audience would be able to submit questions to the panellists via Zoom or raise their hand to ask the question directly to the panellists.

To allow for a lively and informative discussion, UNECE will ensure balanced gender and geographic representation as well as diversity in the backgrounds and views represented by the roundtable participants.

HIGH-LEVEL OPENING

09:15 a.m. – 09:30 a. m. (CEST)

The UNECE Executive Secretary and Chair of the Commission will deliver welcome remarks.

Moderator: *Dmitry Mariyasin, Deputy Executive Secretary, UNECE*

- **WELCOME REMARKS**
 - **Olga Algayerova**, Executive Secretary, UNECE
 - **H. E. Désirée Schweitzer**, Chair of the Commission and Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations in Geneva

Showcasing results of UNECE Youth Visual Call.

SETTING THE STAGE

09:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. (CEST)

This session will highlight the relevance of the circular economy for the UNECE region, review what the UNECE has achieved, and chart the way forward. This session will also introduce the topics that will be discussed in the following sessions, and present the work of UNECE's Circular STEP network, its goals, and its accomplishments.

Moderator: *Dmitry Mariyasin, Deputy Executive Secretary, UNECE*

- **EXPECTATIONS FROM UNECE MEMBER STATES**
 - Interventions from Member States representatives



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- **KEYNOTE**

- **Jocelyn Blériot**, Executive Lead, Ellen MacArthur Foundation

SESSION 1: SHAPING POLICIES FOR THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. (CEST)

Session 1 will take the form of a moderated discussion among thought leaders and experts, including from think tanks, initiatives and the public sector, with a particular focus on policy and institutional-related questions.

Moderator: *Elisabeth Türk*, UNECE Director of Economic Cooperation and Trade Division

- **PANELISTS**

- **Mirza Hujčić**, Assistant Minister at the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- **William Neale**, Advisor to the European Commission on Circular Economy and Green Growth
- **Ella Jamsin**, Co-director, Belgian Climate Centre
- **Tim Forslund**, Specialist for Sustainability Solutions for the Economy, Sitra
- **Fiona Charnley**, Professor of Circular Innovation and Co-Director of the National Interdisciplinary Circular Economy Research Hub

- **DISCUSSION AND Q&A**

SESSION 2: FOSTERING CIRCULAR SOLUTIONS THROUGH INNOVATION

11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. (CEST)

Session 2 will take the form of a moderated discussion dedicated to the empowerment of start-ups, micro-, small, and medium-sized enterprises to innovate for the green and circular transition in the UNECE region. Innovative products and business models that are profitable but also socially and environmentally responsible are a cornerstone of the circular transition. This is doubly true for the many economies in the UNECE region, including the UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia – SPECA, which are dependent on exports of natural resources. An effective innovation ecosystem where both the public and private sectors are actively involved is critical. Governments and business support institutions (such as business incubators and accelerators) in the UNECE region have made progress in promoting this type of innovation, but much more needs to be done.

Moderator: *Elisabeth Türk*, UNECE Director of Economic Cooperation and Trade Division

- **PANELISTS**

- **Aisuluu Mustapakulova**, Head of the Innovation and Strategic Development Department, Kyrgyz State Agency for Intellectual Property and Innovation
- **Raphaël Masvigner**, Co-Founder and Sustainability Board Member, Circul'R
- **Ljupka Mitrinovska**, Co-founder and Global Program Director, Accelerate2030



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- **Irakli Kashbadze**, CEO, Future Laboratory and Startup Central Eurasia Coordinator
- **Zhongyun Fan**, Professor of Metallurgy and Founder and Director, BCAST at Brunel University
- **DISCUSSION AND Q&A**

SESSION 3: ACCELERATING DECARBONIZATION AND PROMOTING CIRCULARITY THROUGH TRANSPARENCY IN VALUE CHAINS

02:00 p.m. – 03:00 p.m. (CEST)

Session 3 will take the form of a moderated discussion among public and private sector, thought leaders and experts, with a particular focus on how to foster circular economy through increased transparency in value chains.

Moderator: *Jack Barrie, Research Fellow on Circular Economy, Chatham House*

- **PANELISTS**
 - **Anil Arora**, Chief Statistician of Canada
 - **Agnes Gkoutziamani**, Advocacy Manager, Youth and Environment Europe
 - **Seyhan Aktemur**, Chief Commercial Officer, SÖKTAS
 - **Johan Mulder**, Chief International Trade Unit, UN ECLAC
 - **Nada Bougouss**, Senior Fish Value Chain Expert at the Fisheries and Aquaculture Division of FAO
 - **Daniella Savic**, Head of International ESG Compliance, Eurasian Resources Group (ERG)
- **DISCUSSION AND Q&A**

SESSION 4: DRIVING THE GREEN TRANSITION THROUGH THE UNECE NETWORK: CIRCULAR STEP

03:00 p.m. – 04:00 p.m. (CEST)

Session 4 will take the form of a moderated discussion among thought leaders and practitioners, from different circular economy initiatives and alliances, with a particular focus on UNECE's Circular STEP network.

Moderator: *Elisabeth Türk, UNECE Director of Economic Cooperation and Trade Division*

- **PANELISTS**
 - **Elizabeth Nichols**, Foreign Affairs Officer, United States Department of State, Office of Environmental Quality
 - **Mike Werner**, Head of Circular Economy, and Global Sustainability at Google
 - **Jorge Laguna Celis**, Director Responsible for UN Environment's One Planet Network
 - **Claire Thiebault**, Programme Management Officer, Consumption and Production Unit - Resources and Markets Branch (GACERE)
 - **Zulfira Zikrina**, Expert, Sustainable Consumption and Production in Central Asia



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- DISCUSSION AND Q&A

CLOSING SESSION:

WRAP UP AND REFLECTIONS FROM REPRESENTATIVES OF UNECE MEMBER STATES

04:00 p.m. – 04:30 p.m. (CEST)

Moderator: Elisabeth Türk, UNECE Director of Economic Cooperation and Trade Division

- WRAP UP FOR THE DAY
 - Reflections from representatives of UNECE Member States on the day's sessions