

Report of the online Training workshop “Guidelines and best practices for MSMEs to assure resiliency and progress towards a circular economy in sustainable resource management and critical raw material supply chain solutions”

The online Training workshop “Guidelines and best practices for MSMEs to assure resiliency and progress towards a circular economy in sustainable resource management and critical raw material supply chain solutions” was organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) on 8 October 2020. The workshop was attended by 153 participants, of which 60 women, from the following countries: Albania, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan (UNECE member States and RPTC programme countries); Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and United States (UNECE member States); Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Colombia, Comoros, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Korea (Republic of), Lebanon, Libya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, South Africa, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Thailand, Uganda, and Venezuela, as well as a number of national and international organizations, associations, companies, and institutions.

The study [*Guidelines and best practices for MSMEs to assure resiliency and progress towards a circular economy in sustainable resource management and critical raw material supply chain solutions*](#) served as a basis for this training workshop. The report focuses on the opportunities and challenges for micro-, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) involved in critical raw material supplies in response to COVID-19 pandemic and the post-pandemic economic recovery. The pandemic has placed critical raw material supply chains under severe pressure; however, it also opens opportunities which could be filled in by MSMEs. Many of the opportunities will also enable MSMEs to make significant contributions in sustainable resource management, building resiliency and progress towards the circular economy in a predicted economic recovery worldwide. Economic disruptions have also brought in new challenges, which require innovative solutions. [*Application of UNFC and UNRMS in sustainable resource management*](#) can be useful for MSMEs to build innovative business models and gain from the new avenues that are being opened.

Countries can support MSMEs in developing alternate business models by optimizing policies and regulations. These changes could allow MSMEs to have better access to data, information and knowledge, enhanced market access, and access to technology and finance. Entrepreneurial skill facilitation and training of employees are other key challenges that need to be addressed by companies and governments. The study recommends the establishment of an international platform - MSME Raw Material Alliance for Circular Economy (MRM-ACE). MRM-ACE could be a platform to bring together governments, financial institutions and MSMEs to support raw material supply chains. Its objectives would include:

- Formal international coordination mechanisms for policymaking in the MSME sector;
- Simplifying access to finance for MSMEs;
- Promoting skills development and entrepreneurial culture;
- Supporting MSMEs' internationalization;
- Facilitating MSMEs' innovation and R&D.

The workshop was opened by Harikrishnan Tulsidas, UNECE Economic Affairs Officer, Sustainable Energy Division. He moderated the workshop and also provided a brief introduction of UNFC and UNRMS. Oleg Dzioubinski, UNECE Regional Adviser for Energy, made welcoming remarks. He gave an overview of SED activities in support of MSMEs in their recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. He provided a background on the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) project "Global Initiative towards the post-Covid-19 resurgence of the MSME sector" implemented jointly with other partners from the United Nations system (under which this Training workshop was organized). The training course was presented by Michael Haschke (UNECE consultant) and Hartwig Gielisch (DMT, Germany). The presentation was followed by an extended discussion among participants with answers provided by Michael Haschke, Hartwig Gielisch, Harikrishnan Tulsidas and Oleg Dzioubinski.

All workshop materials are posted at <https://unece.org/sustainable-energy/events/online-training-workshop-guidelines-and-best-practices-msmes-assure>, including the recording of the workshop, the presentation, and the study. The press release on the study is available at <https://unece.org/sustainable-energy/press/unece-issues-guidelines-and-best-practices-small-businesses-critical-raw>.