

**Speech of H.E. Levan Davitashvili, Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia**

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**“Promoting circular economy and sustainable use of natural resources in the UNECE region”**

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One of the main goals announced by the Third National Environmental Action Programme of Georgia (NEAP-3), which covers all of the national and sectoral environmental strategic directions in Georgia, is the transition to a green economy and the implementation of an environmental dimension of sustainable development. Furthermore, one of the main goals of the Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy of Georgia 2021 – 2027 and its Action Plan (2021-2023) is sustainable use of natural resources, retaining the eco-system, adaptation to climate change and supporting the implementation of energy-efficient and renewable energy technologies and practices.

We actively work on the development of a circular economy in the country. In this regard, we are committed to support waste prevention, reuse, recycling, energy recovery according to the environmentally sound management standards and safe disposal of waste. In order to implement Extended Producer Responsibility, we developed six bylaws on the number of waste streams - (batteries and accumulators, waste oils, waste tires, waste of electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE), end of life vehicles (ELV) and packaging waste). Four bylaws have already been adopted by the Government of Georgia. The role of the extended producer responsibility organizations in the enforcement of the legislation is crucial.

Development of the circular economy is also essential for Georgia in terms of reducing the greenhouse gas emissions and fighting climate change. It should be noted that Georgia has updated and approved its new Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC). New NDC has new targets, which are more ambitious as it was requested under the Paris Agreement (Georgia is fully committed to an unconditional limiting target of 35 % below 1990 level of its domestic total greenhouse gas emissions by 2030; Unconditional targets would be increased by 50-57% in case of international support).

For the implementation of the Mitigation part of NDC, Georgia has also adopted the “2030 Climate Change Strategy and 2021-2023 Action Plan”. (The document covers sectoral chapters on energy generation and transmission, waste, building, industry, transport, agriculture, and forestry).

We see the new NDC and Climate Strategy as an opportunity for the country to pursue innovative ways for development, as climate mitigation is all about innovation and new technologies, which has huge co-benefits for all sectors. To support that process, we are starting to work on Technology Needs Assessment, which will enable us to identify and introduce the best available technologies for supporting our climate goals.

Moreover, Georgia is actively working towards ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources. The latest activity in this direction is a new Forest Code of Georgia, (adopted by the Parliament of Georgia in 2020). The new Code provides the legal framework for sustainable forest management that will support the ecological stability of forest ecosystems, enhance the socio-economic benefits for the public and reduce the pressure on forests.

It is worth-mentioning that an implementation phase of the project “Enabling Implementation of Forest Sector Reform in Georgia to Reduce GHG Emissions from Forest Degradation” funded by the Green Climate Fund (with the total budget of 206.1m. USD), will be launched soon. The purpose of the project is to contribute to the launched reforms for the establishment of sustainable management of forests in three regions of Georgia, (Guria, Mtshketa-Mtianeti and Kakheti), as well as to reduce GHG emissions from forest degradation.