



Regional Policy Dialogue:

Harnessing trade and economic cooperation for the transition to a circular economy in the UNECE region

28 October 2021, online



OPENING & CLOSING



Olga Algayerova,
Executive Secretary,
UNECE



H.E. Alibek Kuantyrov,
Vice Minister of
National Economy,
Republic of Kazakhstan



Jocelyn Bleriot,
Executive Officer, Ellen
MacArthur Foundation



Dmitry Mariyasin,
Deputy Executive
Secretary, UNECE

PANELLISTS



Irma Gurguliani,
Dep. Head, Waste and
Chemicals Management
Department, Georgia



Alexander Dyukarev, Head of UN
Division, Department for Multilateral
Economic Coop. & Special Projects,
Russian Federation



William Neale,
Advisor for Circular Economy,
European Commission



Jorge Laguna-Celis
Head, One Planet Network
Secretariat, UNEP



Ardita Seknaj,
Secretary-General,
ICC Albania



Petar Uskokovic, Faculty
Dean, University of
Belgrade, Serbia



MODERATOR
Elisabeth Tuerk,
Director, Economic
Cooperation & Trade, UNECE



Meeting Report

Meeting Overview

The first Regional Policy Dialogue launched the new multi-agency UN DA Project on *Accelerating the transition towards a circular economy in the UNECE region*, led by the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division of United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The two-hour event discussed “Harnessing trade and economic cooperation for the transition to a circular economy” and featured experts from international organisations, member States, think-tanks, academia, and business. The event was held in English; Russian translation was provided.

A high-level opening set the scene for the panel discussion, elaborating on the importance of circularity and the progress made so far. The panel discussion then shed a light on specific perspectives on the challenges and opportunities the circularity transition brings for the individual stakeholders.

Key emerging messages include:

- The circular economy is an important topic for the UNECE region. While some countries/sub-regions are front runners in promoting circularity, awareness and understanding of the concept is increasing throughout the Pan-European region.
- Waste – its reduction, recycling and repurposing is a key entry point for the circular transition. Ultimately, a circular economy covers many other economic sectors and areas of policy making (e.g. agri-food, services, infrastructure etc.).
- Innovation, investment and trade are needed to scale up circular solutions from local to regional and global level. When considering the potential of trade, care has to be given to ensure that policies act as enablers to enhancing circularity and trade, and not as barriers.
- Transitioning to a circular economy requires collaboration between different stakeholders/ministries, including from the environmental and the economic side. It also requires capacity building and technical assistance for those actors, public and private, that are at a less advanced stage.
- A holistic, strategic approach to circularity is necessary. UNECE, as a follow up to its 69th Commission session, and as host of the multi-agency UN DA project, offers a platform for multi-stakeholder engagement towards a circular transition in the Pan-European region.

High-Level Opening Segment

The high-level opening segment featured speakers from international organization, government and civil society:

- Ms. Olga Algayerova, UNECE Executive Secretary
- H.E. Mr. Alibek Kuantyrov, Vice Minister of National Economy, Republic of Kazakhstan
- Mr. Jocelyn Blériot, Executive Officer at the EllenMacArthur Foundation

Ms. Olga Algayerova opened the Regional Policy Dialogue raising awareness for the urgency behind circularity and what UNECE can contribute to the transition. She stressed that an inclusive and effective transition to circularity is not straightforward. It requires cooperation among countries, starting at the local, over the regional and ultimately to the global level. It is dependent on the interaction between the spheres of environmental, social and economic policy makers. UNECE can help address both challenges. The Economic Cooperation and Trade Division is already supporting countries to harness the power of the economic sphere, that is trade, innovation and financing for the circular transition. Topics

such as sustainable procurement, traceability and transparency of supply chains and waste management including waste-to-energy projects have been UNECE’s priority.

H.E. Mr. Alibek Kuantyrov provided an overview of Kazakhstan’s progress in sustainable development, trade, and circular economy. The speaker discussed Kazakhstan’s key economic ingredients: (i) Innovation – to find new solutions; (ii) Investment, including through PPPs - to finance the circular economy transition; (iii) Entrepreneurship and SMEs – to ensure that the circular economy is creating business opportunities and jobs on the ground. Among other circularity-related activities, Kazakhstan is a co-sponsor of the WTO Trade and Environmental Sustainability Structured Discussions (TESSD) and of the Informal Dialogue on Plastic Pollution and Environmentally Sustainable Plastics (IDP).

Mr. Jocelyn Blériot provided a recorded video for the Regional Policy Dialogue. He displayed the importance of the circularity transition and UNECE’s work in the area, including the UN DA project. He furthermore showcased the toolkit the Ellen MacArthur Foundation offers to all stakeholders in order to foster and promote circularity around the world. Regional fragmentation needs to be avoided. This topic needs to be addressed jointly by environmental and economic stakeholders across different levels, uniting environmental protection and economic prosperity. UNECE with its toolkit and new project can support this cross-cutting conversation and promote international cooperation in this regard.

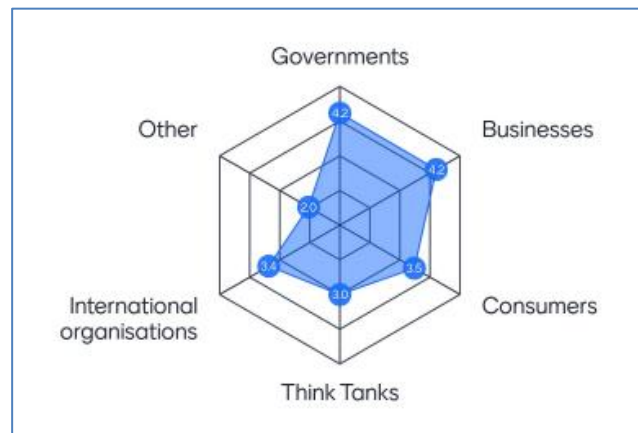
Live Poll Outcomes (Mentimeter)

The attendees were invited to join the Mentimeter live poll to learn about the audience, which circularity aspects they focus on, and who, in their eyes, can drive the circular economy transition.

Answers to question: “Which Circularity aspect do you focus on?”

Waste Management (12x)	Trade (4x)	Education, SMEs (2x)	Packaging
Plastic (9x)	Fashion (3x)	Policy frameworks and synergies (2x)	Urban circularity
Food (7x)	Value chain approach (3x)	Sustainable tourism (2x)	Mobility
Agriculture (6x)	Responsible Consumption (3x)	Protecting pollinators (promoting beekeeping) (2x)	Fishing
Energy (5x)	Product life extension and new business models (3x)	Innovation (2x)	Raw materials
Resource Use (5x)	Construction (2x)	Factories and desalination units	Communications
Standardization (4x)	International Organizations (2x)	Use of wetlands	Mining
Public Procurement (4x)	Plant Biomass (2x)	Chemical Safety	Economic Cooperation

Result to question “In your eyes, who can drive the circular economy transition?”



Moderated Discussion

The meeting was opened by the moderator Ms. Elisabeth Tuerk, Director at UNECE. She posed the first round of questions and then guided follow up questions, from her or from the chat to the panellists.

The first segment of the panel discussion included the government-related speakers:

- Ms. Irma Gurguliani, Deputy Head, Waste and Chemicals Management Department, Georgia
- Mr. Alexander Dyukarev, Head of UN Division, Department of Multilateral Economic Cooperation and Special Projects, Ministry of Economic Development, Russian Federation
- Mr. William Neale, Advisor for Circular Economy, Directorate-General for Environment, Directorate B – Circular Economy and Green Growth, European Commission

Mr. William Neale elaborated on the evolution of the circular economy in the EU and shared best practices that economies in transition may benefit from on their way forward. The topic of circular economy is at the core of the European green deal, the topic emerged in the region in the past 10 years. He stressed that an inclusive, balanced, strategic approach to the circularity transition is necessary. It is necessary to avoid systemic fragmentation, but instead create a global approach. In hindsight of trade, there needs to be consensus on the global approach to the topic. There should not be a trade-off between economic growth and environmental protection. Mr. Neale shared his work on a digital product passport concept, which can help traceability across borders and lead to more transparent value chains.

Ms. Irma Gurguliani gave insights into the work of the Georgian government in the direction of a circular economy as the topic receives increasing attention in the country. She furthermore displayed which instruments for financing have been used in Georgia and what obstacles may await on the way forward to the transition to circularity. Advice on investment is essential: There needs to be more knowledge sharing and exchange. Businesses need to be involved from the beginning on. In Georgia, the municipalities also have concrete circular economy action plans, and companies are obliged to have waste management plans. The country is trying to find local, individual solutions based on legislation on national level. Currently, Georgia already achieved 80% of its current action plan and strives to continue this trend in the country. Lastly, Ms. Gurguliani highlighted the importance of donor engagement and financial support.

Mr. Alexander Dyukarev shared the progress of the Russian Federation with the panel: The country currently emphasizes major topics:

1. Domestic waste and recycling – The president set the goal of 100% sorting of solid municipal waste by 2030, new infrastructure and facilities have been put into operation.
2. Incentives for recycled materials, including plastics. In December 2020, the extended product and packaging producer responsibility concept was published. It envisions 100% recycling of packaging from 2022 onwards.
3. Incentives for businesses to switch to greener production, including the move to greener technology. The plans are developed to modernize many production facilities of the most polluting enterprises, and public procurement system is being improved.

Furthermore, the Russian Federation focuses on environmental education to increase awareness for the topic and foster the country's efforts in a sustainable manner. Mr. Dyukarev alarmed that circularity can become a barrier to international trade, for example through unbalanced levels of awareness and technical skills, lack of consumer demand, or the high likelihood of trade barriers. It is important to join efforts on information exchange and harmonization of standards to turn circularity into a trade facilitator than a restrictor. UNECE can help in the establishment of such a framework.

The second segment of the panel featured different stakeholders in the transition to circular economy:

- Mr. Jorge Laguna-Celis, Head, One Planet Network Secretariat, Economy Division, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- Ms. Ardita Seknaj, Secretary-General, International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), Republic of Albania
- Mr. Petar Uskokovic, Dean, Faculty of Technology and Metallurgy, University of Belgrade, Republic of Serbia

Mr. Jorge Laguna-Celis commenced the second part by giving insights on the key objectives and ambitions of the One Planet Network and the role of cooperation and partnerships in the context of circular economy and trade. He laid great emphasis on a holistic approach to circularity. In particular, standardization and labelling can be a game changer for trade facilitation. Such overarching guidance, including from International Organisations, and political commitment are necessary for a successful circularity transition. UN agencies should join hands on the SDG12 “Sustainable Consumption and Production” implementation. Especially the environmental and economic dimension need to work together to ensure no one is left behind. Mr. Laguna-Celis heads the secretariat of the One Planet Network, which helps stakeholders within the countries connect with each other and provide a platform for exchange.

Ms. Ardita Seknaj shared both a business and a UNECE member State perspective with the panel. The ICC is supporting businesses in their circularity work in Albania, as the private sector is really the executor in the circular economy transition. SMEs need to be included in circularity efforts as they make a key difference in supply chains. A 360° assessment of the supply chain, and of the economy is necessary. Circularity is starting to arrive in our all products and services, and governments and organisations need to continue fostering the efforts of businesses and facilitate the path to circularity. The Western Balkan region is stepping up its efforts as the awareness for the topic is rising among the population, yet the process is still in the early stages.

Mr. Petar Uskokovic provided information on the circular economy progress in Serbia. In his position as Dean of Faculty at the University of Belgrade, he participated in the development of Serbia's Circular



Economy Roadmap. The university is involved in various projects with the private sector to develop new, circular technologies. He stressed that academia needs to be involved in the circularity transition to foster knowledge, also among the younger generation about to join the work force. The youth will shape the future, and Serbia is attempting to use the brain potential and scientific knowledge of their universities to drive circularity forward. Universities and schools are essential for environmental education. This dimension shall not be left behind, in particular when aiming for a comprehensive approach. At the moment, Serbia is working on a second version of its national Action Plan with multiple UN agencies and looks forward to future collaboration with UNECE.

Conclusions

The meeting was concluded by Mr. Dmitry Mariyasin, Deputy Executive Secretary at UNECE. He summarized the main conclusions drawn from the previous speakers and shed special light on the importance of partnerships. In the context of the launch of the multi-agency UN DA project, he elaborated on the importance of pooling all efforts and knowledge to collectively drive the circularity transition forward. This cooperation is particularly necessary along international value chains and in cross-border economic cooperation. In the upcoming years, the UNECE will continue its work in the field of circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources, both in their inter-governmental bodies and under the framework of the UN DA project. The four-year project will include multiple regional policy dialogues on topics such as supply chain traceability, waste management including food loss and waste, as well as innovation and sustainable public procurement. On these issues, several policy papers will be published to compile knowledge in specific thematic areas in cooperation with the programme countries, to build capacity and eventually accelerate the transition towards a circular economy.

Annex 1: Agenda

High-Level Opening

- Ms. Olga Algayerova, Executive Secretary, UNECE
- H.E. Mr. Alibek Kuantyrov, Vice Minister of National Economy, Republic of Kazakhstan
- Mr. Jocelyn Blériot, Executive Officer, Ellen MacArthur Foundation

Moderated Panel Discussion

- Ms. Irma Gurguliani, Deputy Head, Waste and Chemicals Management Department, Georgia
- Mr. Alexander Dyukarev, Head of UN Division, Department of Multilateral Economic Cooperation and Special Projects, Ministry of Economic Development, Russian Federation
- Mr. William Neale, Advisor for Circular Economy, Directorate-General for Environment, Directorate B – Circular Economy and Green Growth, European Commission
- Mr. Jorge Laguna-Celis, Head, One Planet Network Secretariat, Economy Division, UNEP
- Ms. Ardita Seknaj, Secretary-General, International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), Republic of Albania
- Mr. Petar Uskokovic, Dean, Faculty of Technology and Metallurgy, University of Belgrade, Republic of Serbia

Moderator

Ms. Elisabeth Tuerk, Director of Economic Cooperation and Trade Division, UNECE

Closing Remarks

Mr. Dmitry Mariyasin, Deputy Executive Secretary, UNECE

Annex 2: List of Participants

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation	Organization	First Name	Last Name	Affiliation	Organization
Adel	Taha	Sustainable Development Expert	Federation of Egyptian Industries - Environmental Compliance Office & Sustainable Development	Magali	Outters	Team Leader Policy Area	SCP/RAC (UNEP/MAP)
Admir	Duraj	Lawyer	Studio D	Magdalena	Frydrych	Head of Unit	Bureau for Chemical Substances, PL
Ahmed	Kamal	Executive Director	FEI-ECO	Maja	Đolić	Assistant Professor	Faculty of Technology and Metallurgy, University of Belgrade, Serbia
Aigerim	Tortbayeva	Chief Expert	MNE RK	Mange Ram	Adhana	President	Association For Promotion Sustainable Development, IN
Akbermet	Omuralieva	Phd Student	Kyrgyz Economic University	Mansour	Saleem	Associate Member	Saudi Green Building Forum
Alagie	Manneh	Founder	Sustainability Center, GM	Maria	Kanwal	Assistant Professor	The Women University, Multan
Alan	Bokayev	Chief Specialist	ECOJER ASSOCIATION	Marianne	Gjørv	Senior Adviser	Norwegian Environment Agency
Alejandro	Bustamante	Research Assisstant	ECLAC	Marianne	Kettunen	Senior Policy Advisor and Head of Partnerships	Forum on Trade, Environment & the SDGs - TESS Forum
Alessia	Galli	Intern	Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations	Marie	Salopiata	Fellow	UNEP

Alexandra	Karpodini	Civil Servant	Ministry of Environment and Energy	Marija	Lazić	Student	SPTMF
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Alicia	Fajardo	Experto En Turismo	Better Tourism	Marko	Tasic	Project Sales Engineer	SOL Group
Alicja	Kacprzak	Forestry Officer	FAO	Marlena	Hofherr	Intern	ITC
Alina	Steinborn	Intern	UNICEF	Marta	Ottogalli	Product Manager	UNEP
Alison	Kinn Bennett	Senior Advisor	US EPA	Martin	Krautkrämer	Zweiter Sekretär	German Mission to the UN
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Amaya	Apestequia	Sustainable Consumption Expert	OCU	Maureen Grace	Lebria	Programmes And Projects Director	Philippine Center for Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development, Inc.
Ana	Popovic	Senior Lecturer	The Academy of Applied Technical Studies Belgrade	Maxwell	Torney	Program Specialist	US EPA
Ana	Zacharian	Ceo	Albanian Skills - National Association for Skills Competitions	Meas	Rith	Official	Council for the Development of Cambodia(CDC)
Ana	Lukatela	Head Of Rco	UN RCO	Mia	Reiss	Fellow	FAO
Ana	Milić	Student	TMF, TJ	Michael	Iurchenko	Expert	
Anastasia	Pankova	Individual Expert	UNECE	Michael	Kakule Vutsapu	Président Du Conseil D'administration Du	Groupe Academia RDCongo Centre d'apprentissage des métiers

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Angelina	Popić	Student	Tehnološko-metalurški fakultet	Mika	Vepsalainen	Chief, Market Access Section, Ectd	UNECE
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Artem	Golev	Research Fellow	The University of Queensland	Moffat	Kaunda	Director	Go Green save the Environment, ZA
Aruna	Gohil	Propreitor	Argo Environ. Solutions	Moise	Kitete Manala	Président	Build Peace and Development
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Jelena	Vucicevic	Eng.Technology	Superlab	Tatiana	Gustafikova	Environmentalist	Slovak Environment Agency
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Jovana	Maleš	Student	Faculty of Technology and Metallurgy, University of Belgrade	Upendra	Weerathunga	Senior Recp Expert	NCPC Sri Lanka
Julian	Hilton	Chairman	Aleff Group	Uwe	Fortkamp	Head Of Unit	Naturvårdsverket
Jyldyz	Duishenova	Chief Expert Of The Climate And Sustainable Development Department	Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Technical Supervision of the Kyrgyz Republic	Vanessa	Behrens	Project Manager Gii	WIPO
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Karin	Badenhorst	Founder	Footsteps Foundation	Vesna	Alivojvodic	Lecturer	The Academy of Applied Technical Studies Belgrade
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