

Accelerating the Circular Economy Transition: Policy Options for Harnessing the Power of Trade and Economic Cooperation

27 June, 12:30-14:00, hybrid: Tempus 1, Palais des Nations and Zoom

In spring 2021, at the 69th Session of the Commission, the 56 member States of the UNECE made important decisions regarding the circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources. They emphasized the need to further strengthen the Commission's work and suggested its sectoral committees and subsidiary bodies **scale up their efforts to promote circular economy approaches and the sustainable use of natural resources, within the existing mandate of the Commission (E/ECE/1497)**. In response, the UNECE Secretariat took steps to integrate a circular economy approach in its relevant activity streams, including those related to trade.

Circular economy business models can bring multiple economic, social, and environmental benefits. While not explicitly mentioned, principles of CE can be found in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably 8, 9, and 12. SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth) promotes global resource efficiency in consumption and production. SDG 9 (Industry, innovation, and infrastructure) fosters the adoption of resource-efficient and environmentally sound technologies, while SDG 12 (Responsible consumption and production) emphasizes resource efficiency and waste reduction. **Despite these potential benefits, today, the global economy's circularity level is still in the single digits, with a negative trend (8.6 percent in 2021, down from 9.1 percent in 2018, according to the Circularity Gap Report 2022).** Action to reverse this trend is needed.

In a global interconnected economy, international trade and economic cooperation can be enablers of the CE transition. While management and reduction of waste are obvious entry points for the circular transition in the UNECE region, **circularity is increasingly seen as cutting across many other sectors** of economic activities along supply chains and trade in goods and services. Policy areas such as trade, together with investment, digitalization and innovation are essential drivers to make the circular transition work. **Trade policy tools such as standards, trade-related regulations and procedures, trade bans (used selectively), supply chain traceability, innovation enhancing procurement as well as related international and regional instruments can support the circular economy agenda.**

At the same time, harnessing potential opportunities may not be easy for UNECE transition economies. Sound policymaking, including fact-based gap analyses, inclusive development of strategies, and meticulous adoption of implementing legislation are critical in this process. **International and regional cooperation, including sharing of experiences and building capacity, can play an important supportive work.**

About the Event

[Registration](#)

This informal lunchtime session takes place in hybrid format under the UNDA project "Accelerating the transition towards a circular economy in the UNECE region". **It discusses how trade and economic cooperation can contribute to shifting towards the circular economy in the UNECE transition economies.**

The event will feature a keynote presentation, which highlights the main findings of the analytical paper "Accelerating the Transition towards a Circular Economy in the UNECE Region - Policy Options for Harnessing the Power of Trade and Economic Cooperation" prepared under the UNDA project.

In the first part of the session, the speakers will explore the **trade-circular economy nexus, share some successful experiences, and address existing challenges vis-à-vis the circular economy shift in transition economies.** This part will also provide an opportunity to reflect on the way forward, including through the discussions within current international initiatives such as the WTO Trade and Environmental Sustainability Structured Discussions.

The second part of the session will look at circular supply chains as a specific entry point for the circular transition. The speakers will discuss existing experiences and tools, including related to traceability of supply chains, and suggest policies that can facilitate this process.



UNECE



CIRCULAR STEP EVENT



DRAFT AGENDA

*27 June, 12:30-14:00, Tempus 1, Palais des Nations and Zoom
English-Russian interpretation*

Opening remarks

- *Mr. Dmitry Mariyasin*, Deputy Executive Secretary, UNECE
- *Mr. Xiangchen Zhang*, Deputy Director-General, WTO

Keynote presentation

- *Mr. Josip Pervan*, UNECE Consultant - Setting the stage on CE and trade, based on the analytical policy paper prepared under the UNDA Circular Economy project ([Link to Executive Summary](#))

Moderation

- *Ms. Elisabeth Tuerk*, Director, Economic Cooperation & Trade, UNECE

1: Circular economy and trade: existing entry points, experiences, and challenges in transition economies

- *H.E. Ambassador Tatiana Molcean*, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Moldova to the United Nations Office & other international organizations in Geneva
- *High-Level Representative from the European Union (tbc)*
- *Ms. Carolyn Deere Birkbeck*, Director, Forum on Trade, Environment & the SDGs

2: Circular supply chains: a concrete entry point for the circular economy transition

- *H.E. Mr. Badriddin Abidov*, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Investments and Foreign Trade of the Republic of Uzbekistan
- *H.E. Ambassador Simon Manley*, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain & Northern Ireland to the United Nations, World Trade Organization, & other international organizations in Geneva
- *Ms. Alice Tipping*, Lead, Sustainable Trade and Fisheries Subsidies, IISD Europe

Q&A: Questions from the audience