



UNECE

Regional Conference on the Circular Economy

26 JUNE 2024 | ROOM V | PALAIS DES NATIONS | GENEVA

UNECE Regional Conference on the Circular Economy¹ Preliminary programme²

Wednesday, 26 June 2024

10:00 – 10:30 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12 on Sustainable Consumption and Production is one of the SDGs experiencing backsliding – globally and in the UNECE region. In the past six years, the world has consumed almost as many materials as in the whole 20th century. At the same time, circularity, i.e. the share of secondary materials in total materials used, has declined steadily. The bulk of the overshoot of planetary boundaries occurs in higher-income and middle-income countries, many of them member States of UNECE.

In April 2021, at their [69th Commission session](#), UNECE member States decided that the circular economy transformation and the sustainable use of natural resources be a cross-cutting priority theme for the organization. Since then, the normative machinery serviced by [UNECE's Economic Cooperation and Trade Division \(ECTD\)](#) has produced a series of normative instruments guiding member States in their efforts to harness the power of innovation, infrastructure financing and trade for the circular economy transition³.

This Conference takes stock of the normative instruments adopted by UNECE since 2021 and initial lessons learned in their application. The Conference also provides a platform for government-nominated focal points of [Circular STEP](#), UNECE's Stakeholder Engagement Platform and for members of [ETIN](#), UNECE's Transformative Innovation Network to contribute to UNECE's ongoing efforts in supporting member States in the circular economy transition.

OPENING

- **Ms. Elisabeth Türk**, Director, Economic Cooperation and Trade Division, UNECE
- **Mr. Jocelyn Blériot**, Executive Director, Ellen MacArthur Foundation

KEYNOTE

- **Ms. Marijana Novak**, Director, Circle Economy
- **Ms. Fiona Charnley**, Co-Director, Exeter Center for Circular Economy, Circular STEP focal point

¹ This Conference is part of the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships ([CICPPP](#)) (agenda item 9, substantive segment (b) Accelerating the Circular Economy transition in the UNECE) and part of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards ([SCTCS](#)) (agenda item 2, high-level substantive segment (a) Regional Conference on the Circular Economy). It is organized with support of the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) project on "Accelerating the Transition towards a Circular Economy in the UNECE region".

² Speakers are listed alphabetically by member States (first) and organizations they represent.

³ Documentation: [Progress report on the work of the Commission on the promotion of a circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources](#).



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Circular STEP

Stakeholder Engagement Platform
to accelerate the circular economy transition in the UNECE region



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10:30 – 11:45

PART I: SUBSTANTIVE SEGMENT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INNOVATION, COMPETITIVENESS AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

REVERSING COURSE: INNOVATION-ENHANCING PROCUREMENT FOR THE CIRCULARITY TRANSITION

Stimulating innovation is essential to accelerate the transition to a more circular economy. Innovation-enhancing public procurement can be a powerful tool to generate ideas that are conducive to the systemic shifts in production and consumption patterns that are needed for the circular transition. To successfully mainstream innovation, circularity and sustainability into procurement practices, governments need to know how to manage risks, improve the skills of public procurement officials, enhance data collection and monitor results, and try out new forms of partnerships and co-ordination.

The UNECE Team of Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness Policies (ToS-ICP) developed a [Policy Guidance on Innovation-enhancing Procurement, endorsed by the CICPPP](#) (ECE/CECI/2021/5) in 2021. This guidance was rolled-out, including in Georgia through the national [Innovation for Sustainable Development Review \(I4SDR\)](#), a tailored [Policy Handbook](#) and a study tour for public officials to Norway.

This panel will explore policy experience with innovation-enhancing public procurement as a possible catalyst for the innovation needed to progress towards the circular economy.

Moderator: **Mr. Tim Forslund**, Circular Economy Specialist, The Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra

Panelists:

- **Mr. Kakha Demetrashvili**, Deputy Chairperson, State Procurement Agency, Georgia
- **Ms. Carla Dekker**, Senior Advisor, Innovation Procurement, Enterprise Agency, Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Netherlands
- **Mr. Matej Cerovšek**, Expert, Ministry of Environment, Climate and Energy, Republic of Slovenia
- **Mr. Jakob Lindvall**, CEO & Co-founder, Angland Lindvall Development AB (ALDAB) Innovation, member of UNECE ETIN
- **Ms. Anita Skog**, Innovation Driver, Artic Pioneers
- **Mr. Jon Mikel Zabala-Iturriagoitia**, Professor, University of Deusto

Q&A



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11:45 – 13:00 | IMPLEMENTING UNECE PPP FOR THE SDGS GUIDELINES TO PROMOTE THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY⁴

Financing plays a crucial role in driving the circular economy transition. This is particularly so, when it comes to mobilizing financing for infrastructure sectors such as transportation, energy and urban development, where embedding circular economy practices can promote resource efficiency, resilience, and long-term sustainability. At the same time, investing in circular economy initiatives could generate economic benefits – up to \$4.5 trillion in economic benefits are expected by 2030. Therefore, integrating circular economy principles into Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and infrastructure projects is imperative.

UNECE's normative machinery in PPPs for the SDGs – the Working Party on PPPs – has developed guidelines to support member States in implementing PPP and infrastructure projects that contribute to the circular economy agenda. Notable among these are the [Guidelines on promoting Circular Economy in PPPs for the United Nations SDG \(ECE/CECI/WP/PPP/2022/4\)](#) and the [Guidelines on PPPs for the SDGs in Waste-to-Energy Projects for Non-Recyclable Waste: Pathways towards a Circular Economy \(ECE/CECI/WP/PPP/2022/3\)](#). Developing policy documents marks only the initial step. The real challenge lies in ensuring that these policies are successfully implemented in countries.

The panel will look at the enablers that drive the implementation of UNECE guidelines relating to circular economy in PPPs, as a contribution to a swift progress towards a circular economy.

Moderator: **Mr. Jean-Patrick Marquet**, President, Observatory of the Values in Society & Management, Switzerland

Panelists:

- **Mr. Ulan Danilbekov**, Deputy Director, PPP Center, Kyrgyz Republic
- **Ms. Natasha Hroneska**, Head, Unit for Climate Change and Environment, Directorate for Multilateral Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of North Macedonia, Circular STEP focal point
- **Mr. Thanos Bourtsalas**, Professor, Columbia University
- **Ms. Hajar Bennar**, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Manager, CWP Global
- **Ms. Ella Stengler**, Managing Director, Confederation of Waste-to-Energy Plants (CEWEP)

Q&A

13:00 – 15:00 | LUNCH BREAK

⁴ See document ECE/CECI/WP/PPP/2022/3 [Guidelines on PPPs for the SDGs in Waste-to-Energy Projects for Non-Recyclable Waste: Pathways towards a Circular Economy](#), and document ECE/CECI/WP/PPP/2022/4 [Guidelines on promoting Circular Economy in PPPs for the United Nations SDGs](#)



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SIDE EVENT BY UNIVERSITY OF EXETER: TOOLS FOR DEVELOPING ENABLING POLICIES

14:00 – 14:55

The University of Exeter Circular Economy Hub leads the National Interdisciplinary Circular Economy Research (NICER) programme, a £30M strategic priorities fund (SPF) programme, sponsored by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and managed by the United Kingdom Research and Innovation Council (UKRI). This brings together 5 National research Centres and a Hub comprising 34 Universities to facilitate knowledge sharing, foster collaboration, and accelerate research in the field of the circular economy.

This side event will provide a detailed overview of the [Global Circular Economy Roadmap Dashboard](#) which presents an expansive view of global Circular Economy road mapping, policy activities and metrics covering the UNECE region and beyond. The session will inform countries and regions transitioning to a circular economy on how to shape circular economy roadmaps.

Moderator: **Ms. Fiona Charnley**, Co-Director, Exeter Centre for Circular Economy, Circular STEP focal point

- **Ms. Hema Kotecha**, Deputy Head, UK Mission to the UN, WTO and other International Organisations in Geneva
- **Ms. Elisabeth Türk**, Director, Economic Cooperation and Trade Division, UNECE
- **Mr. Halid Abu-Bakar**, Post Doctoral Research Fellow, University of Exeter

Q&A

15:00 – 15:10

PART II: SUBSTANTIVE SEGMENT OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE ON TRADE CAPACITY AND STANDARDS

OPENING PART II

- **Mr. Nurbek Maksutov**, Vice Chair, Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards, UNECE

15:10 – 16:20

ADVANCING CIRCULAR ECONOMY IN AGRI-FOOD VALUE CHAINS⁵

Today's agricultural production systems are energy- and resource-intensive, relying heavily on fossil-fuel derived inputs, such as fertilizers, fuels and agrochemicals. They also account for a third of greenhouse gas emissions and 70 per cent of freshwater use globally. At the same time, today about a third of all food produced globally goes to waste, accounting for a significant portion of greenhouse gas emissions and posing economic and environmental costs. A circular economy approach can help improve resource efficiency and increase

⁵ Documentation: [Accelerating the transition towards a circular economy in the Economic Commission for Europe region: focus on reducing food loss and waste | UNECE](#)



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utilization of by-products through a bioeconomy, creating a regenerative and sustainable agri-food system.

UNECE's long standing normative machinery in the field of agricultural quality standards (Working Party 7), has developed relevant guidance, notably the [Code of Good Practice: Reducing food loss and ensuring optimum handling of fresh fruit and vegetables along the value chain](#) (ECE/TRADE/470).

This panel will discuss challenges and policy options for ensuring a circular transition in the agri-food sector through increasing resource-use efficiency, minimizing food loss and waste, and promoting the use of byproducts in a circular bioeconomy. It will showcase the [experience of the Republic of Serbia](#) in tailoring UNECE policy options for circular economy transition in agri-food sector.

Moderator: **Ms. Marit Nilses**, Economic Affairs Officer, UNECE, Secretary of the UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7)

Panelists:

- **Ms. Snezana Savcic Petric**, Senior Advisor, Plant Protection Directorate, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Republic of Serbia
- **Mr. Shane Ward**, Professor, School of Biosystems and Food Engineering, University College Dublin
- **Mr. Robert van Otterdijk**, Agro-Industry Officer, Food Loss and Waste Reduction, Market Linkages and Value Chains, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
- **Mr. Felix Stähli**, Co-president, Impact Hub Switzerland, Co-founder, Impact Hub Geneva & Lausanne
- **Ms. Céline Giner**, Agricultural Policy Analyst, Agro-Food Trade and Markets Division, Trade and Agriculture Directorate, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
- **Ms. Hannah van Zanten**, Professor, Farming Systems Ecology Group, Wageningen University (pre-recorded intervention)

Q&A

16:20 – 17:30

IMPROVING TRACEABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY ALONG INTERNATIONAL VALUE CHAINS IN THE GARMENT AND FOOTWEAR SECTOR FOR THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Traceability and transparency are essential for effective value chains in a circular economy. Traceability is the ability to track materials and products throughout their lifecycle, from raw material sourcing to end-of-life management. Transparency on the other hand involves openly sharing information about sourcing, production, distribution, and disposal processes.

The agrifood, clothing, and mineral sectors are crucial both within the ECE region and globally. These sectors are at the intersection of the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda, as they provide growth opportunities and jobs for millions of workers, particularly in emerging economies, while posing considerable risks for human and social rights and the environment. Traceability and transparency enable responsible



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production and consumption choices, by providing consumers, investors, procuring agencies, and regulators with confidence in the sustainability of goods and services placed on markets.

In the clothing sector, for instance, UNECE's trade facilitation body (UN/CEFACT) has developed recommendations and standards to track and trace the sustainability impact of clothing products from raw materials to purchase and beyond. These [tools](#), tested through pilots including through advanced digital technologies like blockchain, fall under the [UNECE Sustainability Pledge](#).

Building on a recently published [UNECE Policy Paper on Accelerating the Transition Towards a Circular Economy in the Economic Commission for Europe Region](#), discussions will focus on initial global implementation experiences, benefits, and challenges of these tools and technologies in achieving effective traceability and transparency for circularity. The panel will also explore expanding UNECE's Sustainability Pledge from clothing to other critical sectors for the circular transition, namely agrifood and minerals.

Moderator: **Ms. Maria Teresa Pisani**, Chief ad Interim, Trade Facilitation Section, ECTD, UNECE

Panelists:

- **Ms. Artenida Duraku**, Director of Integration and Projects with Foreign Financing, Ministry of Tourism and Environment, Republic of Albania
- **Ms. Deborah Taylor**, Managing Director, Sustainable Leather Foundation
- **Mr. Jens Kristian Norgaard**, Technical Key Expert, Sustainable Consumption and Production, SWITCH to Green Facility
- **Ms. Tatiana Chernyavskaya**, Industrial Development Expert, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)
- **Ms. Beatriz Fernandez**, Programme Management Officer, Resources and Markets Branch, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- **Mr. Hari Tulsidas**, Economic Affairs Officer, Sustainable Natural Resource and Energy Advisor, UNECE

Q&A

17:30 – 18:00

CLOSING AND THE WAY FORWARD

- **Mr. Dmitry Mariyasin**, Deputy Executive Secretary, UNECE

Q&A



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Registration:

Please use the registration link for attending either of the two Committees (even if you plan to attend only the Conference on 26 June 2024): [CICPPP](#) or [SCTCS](#)

Further information:

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