



UNITED NATIONS
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION



Report of the regional preparatory meeting for the African Group for the UNIDO global consultations on circular economy

16 November 2020



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I. Introduction

1. The General Conference, in its resolution GC.18/Res.7, requested the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) to organize consultations on circular economy for experts from Member States with a view to facilitate exchanges on best practices, emerging innovations and the promotion and adoption of circular economy principles and practices by industries of Member States.

2. The objective of the global consultations on circular economy is to consider ways and means to promote circular economy principles and practices, in particular in developing countries, identify barriers and devise action-oriented solutions.

3. The global consultations will be convened using the UNIDO System of Consultations¹ as a guiding framework, taking into account developments since its adoption, lessons learned, outcomes of the respective evaluations and restrictions imposed by the current COVID-19 pandemic.

4. A series of regional preparatory meetings was convened in November 2020 to allow Member State representatives and other stakeholders, in particular from developing countries, to present their initial views on the topic of circular economy and identify issues that will shape the debate at the global consultations.

5. Member States selected the following two discussion topics for the global consultations:

(a) Topic 1: Circular economy as a substantial contribution to addressing the climate crisis and advancing the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG);

(b) Topic 2: Mobilizing finance, technology and capacity-building to promote circular economy principles and practices in developing countries.

6. Based on the above-mentioned topics, the deliberations at the regional preparatory meetings were guided by the following questions:

(a) What do you see as key benefits your country, company or organization can derive from adopting circular economy principles and practices in terms of achieving Sustainable Development Goals and meeting national climate change priorities?

(b) Are there successful examples of introducing circular economy principles and practices in your country, company or organization, including policy and regulatory frameworks as well as national, multilateral, bilateral and South-South cooperation initiatives and partnerships?

¹[https://open.unido.org/api/documents/4792485/download/THE%20SYSTEM%20OF%20CONSULTATIONS%20\(11648e.en\)](https://open.unido.org/api/documents/4792485/download/THE%20SYSTEM%20OF%20CONSULTATIONS%20(11648e.en)).

(c) What are the barriers impeding the adoption of circular economy principles and practices in your country, company or organization?

(d) What support, including arrangements for access to finance, technology transfer and capacity-building, would your country, company or organization require to enable the adoption of circular economy principles and practices?

7. The global consultations on circular economy are tentatively scheduled to take place in the first quarter of 2021.

II. Organizational and procedural matters

8. The regional preparatory meeting for the African Group was held virtually on 16 November 2020. Simultaneous interpretation in French and English was provided during the meeting.

Participation

9. The following 16 Member States of UNIDO participated in the meeting: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lebanon, Madagascar, Mauritius, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa, Tunisia and Zimbabwe.

10. The European Commission was also represented.

11. The following United Nations entities were represented: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the International Trade Centre (ITC), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC), the United Nations University (UNU), and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

12. The following international organization was represented: the Green Growth Knowledge Platform (GGKP).

13. The following non-governmental organizations were represented: the American University of Beirut, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, the East African Civil Society Organisations' Forum (EACSOF), and Nitidae.

14. The following private sector representatives participated: the Business Council for Sustainable Development Zimbabwe (BCSDZ), the General Confederation of Enterprises of Côte d'Ivoire, and the Universal Plastic Products and Recycling Limited.

15. The following observer organization participated: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ).

Opening of the session

16. The meeting was declared open by Mr. Stephan Sicars, Managing Director, Directorate of Environment and Energy, UNIDO, at 14:00 (CET) on 16 November 2020.

Facilitator

17. The meeting was facilitated by Mr. Parfait Kouadio, Deputy Director of Cabinet, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, Cote d'Ivoire.

Agenda of the meeting

18. The meeting adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda.
2. Introductory presentation by the secretariat.
3. Interventions:
 - (a) Interventions by Member States;
 - (b) Interventions by observer organizations.
4. Moderated discussion.
5. Conclusions and adjournment.
6. Announcements by the secretariat.

III. Proceedings

Introductory presentation by the secretariat

19. Mr. Stephan Sicars, Managing Director, Directorate of Environment and Energy, UNIDO, presented the mandate, objectives and expected outcomes of the global consultations on circular economy as well as the guiding questions for the regional preparatory meetings.

20. Ms. Nilgün Tas, Chief, Industrial Resource Efficiency Division, and Deputy Director, Department of Environment, UNIDO, delivered an introductory presentation to set up the scene for discussions by introducing the principles and practices of circular economy.

Interventions by Member States

21. Tunisia stressed that the Agenda 2030 is a major sustainable development plan, which relies on a systemic transition in various areas. While recognizing the challenges relating to the transition to a circular economy, Tunisia is committed to this transition as evident in its

national action plans on the promotion of sustainable patterns of production and consumption for priority sectors, including tourism and agro-industry. Tunisia shared its experience in analyzing the relationship between the implementation of circular economy practices and the quality of life of its population, in particular with regard to waste management as well as water and energy consumption. Activities related to circular economy include the elaboration of four investment guides for priority sectors (agro-tourism, agro-forestry, waste management, and renewable energy), and the SwitchMed project aiming at promoting technology transfer in twenty-six companies. Tunisia stated that an effective promotion of circular economy in all African countries requires a strong political engagement, capacity-building, smart communication plans and adequate international resource mobilization.

22. South Africa declared its commitment to protecting the environment and promoting sustainable lifestyles. South Africa referred to its vast research on the topic of circular economy as well as collaboration with multiple entities on its implementation. Isolated efforts within agencies and governmental entities were mentioned as a constraint to effective promotion of circular economy. A full understanding of the concept of circular economy is imperative to identify potential sectors of innovation. The aforementioned efforts are extended to engagement with universities and educational programmes.

23. Morocco described the global context as an environment calling for circular economy models. In the country, circularity was introduced as a key tool to reduce pollution and create new jobs. Morocco informed the participants about a new national body in charge of green agriculture, transport and sustainable economy. Several success stories were highlighted, including the Ecosim/Ecopath, which recovers the value of waste through emerging systems, a decarbonization strategy for the industrial sector as well as various projects in the agricultural sector. Due to its expansion and increased generation of waste, such as plastic waste, greening of the latter sector is a national priority. Morocco remarked that the government ought to drive private sector investment, capacity-building and dissemination of relevant information among stakeholders.

24. Cote d'Ivoire highlighted waste management and the informal and non-government sector as areas of concern for the country. Government entities have emphasized the lack of information, capacities and new technologies as the barriers to implementing recycling and related waste management strategies. UNIDO was commended for its role in supporting national institutions in issues relating to resource efficiency, specifically in the management of plastic waste.

25. Egypt informed about actions adopted at the national level to implement principles of circular economy. A law on waste management was presented as a means to assign roles to the public and private sectors in order to involve all relevant stakeholders in this crucial issue. The law, also intended to engage civil society, is a result of collaboration between national agencies. Furthermore, Egypt managed to secure financial resources to meet recycling and waste management needs.

26. Nigeria stated that the country has begun incorporating circular economy principles in national policies on all consumption and production issues. Producer responsibility for the environment is used in Nigeria as a strategy to reduce an environmental impact of food and agricultural products. In collaboration with UNIDO, Nigeria has developed a programme to assess the life cycle of plastics and launched a recycling programme to be implemented nationally. The country has set up a team of experts from different fields to promote circular economy and support technology transfer.

27. Ghana emphasized that circular economy aims to address important environmental challenges such as plastic waste. Ghana is focusing its efforts on formulating a relevant policy, which will be a part of the national environmental framework. The barriers to the transition to a circular economy are associated with the need for capacity-building and the lack of expertise required for the implementation of circular economy. Resource mobilization is identified as a critical issue for the realization of circular economy.

28. Kenya recognized that the concept of circular economy still continues to be perceived as new within the country. Kenya declared its commitment to circular economy realizing its potential benefits such as waste reduction, resource efficiency, environmental protection and the creation of new green jobs. Kenya has developed policy documents on producer responsibility, recycling and waste management in collaboration with the private sector. Some of these policies are expected to be implemented in 2021. Low investment in actions relating to circular economy was identified as a barrier, particularly relevant for the introduction of composting practices, given that 60 per cent of national waste is organic. UNIDO could assist with technical cooperation and expertise, specifically for the categorization of waste and required measures for each type of waste, including plastic, textiles, and electronic products.

29. Tunisia referred to existing national programmes to assist and monitor enterprises, industries and entrepreneurs in pollution reduction, waste management, clean production, life cycle analysis and capacity-building. The lack of financing, capacity-building and technology transfer along with the low perceived value of waste were listed as the main obstacles to the transition to a circular economy. Successful cases such as the SwitchMed project as well as waste management and resource optimization initiatives in industrial zones were highlighted.

30. South Africa acknowledged that the national waste management strategy succeeded in converting waste into a raw material from which value can be created. For example, plastic and other types of waste from the automobile sector have been used to manufacture shoes and bags.

31. Tunisia cited success stories in the textile sector, where the concept of reparation was promoted. Food waste was also mentioned as part of the national plan. Changing mindsets, introducing new technologies and disseminating information on circular economy are among the national priorities.

32. Enhancing resource efficiency is one of important issues for Burkina Faso. The country associates the implementation of a circular economy with the following benefits: creation of new jobs, employment of women and youth, reduction in products' cost and emerging innovations. Nevertheless, the lack of awareness was mentioned as an issue that needs to be addressed, as it is likely to affect the ongoing efforts.

Interventions by observer organizations

33. UNWTO declared its full commitment to supporting Member States in their transition to a circular economy. Taking action in this time of crisis is necessary to decrease adverse financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism sector. The management of solid waste, specifically food and plastic waste, was highlighted as fundamental, and so are inter-sectoral and participatory dialogues. Inadequate national tourism policies along with the lack of a concerted action to integrate circularity in the private sector were identified as barriers to the transition to a circular economy. UNWTO noted that it is leading the Global Tourism Plastics Initiative, which is a catalyst of circularity in tourism, together with UNEP and in collaboration with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation.

34. IAEA underlined its role in nuclear waste management and highlighted the opportunities available for applying principles of circular economy in the management of plastics. Radiation technology complements conventional plastic recycling and offers a unique and innovative means to recycle and modify plastic waste to extend the life cycle of plastics and create new tertiary plastic products. IAEA pledged further support to Member States through its mandate of scientific and technology information transfer, by developing reference publications and e-learning materials, providing capacity-building and promoting a network of professionals. IAEA emphasized the need to develop frameworks and regulations, which take the specific nature of circular economy into account, and acknowledged a need to do more on scaling up and technology transfer as well as building strong cooperation, particularly with UNIDO.

35. ITC presented the circular economy model as a strategy to achieve the SDGs, particularly in developing countries. A circular economy does not produce second-hand products, instead it adds value to waste. This valorisation has been hampered by the lack of resources and knowledge. ITC supported 15 developing countries with such initiatives as the development of a new corporate strategy aiming to introduce the concept and practices of circular economy to stakeholders.

36. UNSSC extended an invitation to the participants to enroll in the online course on circular economy and take advantage of other relevant activities of the organization.

37. UNIDO Representative in Zimbabwe highlighted a green industry programme aimed at promoting circular economy, targeting energy efficiency, recycling and energy systems transformation. Investment and stakeholder collaboration were raised as important considerations for the effective implementation of circularity practices.

38. GGKP introduced the Integrated Greening Openings or I-GO pilot project, aiming to develop a database with information and guides on topics related to circular economy. This will assist small and medium sized enterprises in enhancing their understanding of potential

benefits of green solutions and provide information required for implementing green initiatives. The importance of connecting stakeholders and sharing knowledge was emphasized.

39. Nitidae mentioned that Burkina Faso has a solid base for the promotion and implementation of a circular economy. The national framework for circular economy consists of a national strategy accompanied by an action plan currently under formulation. Burkina Faso is seeking to address access to energy as an urgent need, hence efforts are focused on using waste, mainly from agricultural processes, as an energy fuel.

40. EACSOF expressed concern about negative impacts of unsustainable activities. Accordingly, the importance of convening the consultations on circular economy was emphasized, as this space unifies organizations, civil society and government representatives towards a common goal. Governments were encouraged to formulate and implement policies in line with circular economy.

41. The benefits of circular economy were noted by the General Confederation of Enterprises of Cote d'Ivoire, citing the migration from informal to formal jobs, creation of new green jobs, improvement of working conditions for employees and valorization of waste. The following barriers to the transition to a circular economy were listed: limited access to low-carbon technologies, capacity-building and financial resources as well as inconsistent monitoring of projects and emerging initiatives.

42. The Nature Conservation Center of the American University of Beirut stated that in Lebanon the social dimension is considered as part of the framework of circular economy. Existing initiatives, such as the SwitchMed project and national projects bringing together several Mediterranean countries, have been driving waste management efforts in Lebanon, specifically in the areas of composting, recycling and producer responsibility. Research should be a joint and transdisciplinary effort.

43. BCSDZ noted that many opportunities lay in the waste management sector, given the large number of industries that produce waste. Policies resulting from agreements with the private sector and reflecting both economic and environmental perspectives are crucial. The main barriers to the transition to a circular economy are the lack of access to finance and investors, inadequate incentives, consumer mentality, limited collaboration among stakeholders as well as uncoordinated work of international organizations.

Conclusions and adjournment

44. Mr. Kouadio highlighted the importance of accelerating the adoption of circular economy principles, policies and practices as means to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and fully implement the Paris Agreement. He thanked the participants for their engaging interventions and sharing of inspiring experiences. Mr. Kouadio encouraged the participants to learn from successful examples of circular economy initiatives, take them on board and replicate in their respective countries as appropriate.

45. Mr. Kouadio closed the meeting at 17:00 (CET) on 16 November 2020.



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