



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Consultative Meeting on Strengthening Regional Cooperation for Accelerating the Transition
towards a Circular Economy in the Arab Region
Online, 7 August 2024

Information note

I. Background

Linear economies, based on resource extraction, use, and disposal, have led to environmental degradation, depletion of natural resources, and unequal wealth distribution, threatening ecosystems and human well-being. Specifically in the Arab region, economies have traditionally relied on unsustainable resource consumption, resulting in an increasing Material Footprint and Domestic Material Consumption per capita. This trend is driven by resource-intensive lifestyles and the consequent rise in per capita waste. Currently, 90-95 per cent of all municipal solid waste in the Arab region is transported to landfills, with solid waste generation reaching 2.7 kilograms per person per day in some areas.

Given the region's already scarce natural resources and the compounded effects of climate change, unsustainable production and consumption practices intensify environmental degradation and strain limited resources and fragile ecosystems. The Arab region is also lagging in progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Therefore, transitioning from a linear economy and its extractive practices to a circular economy—centered on regenerative and resilient practices—is crucial. A circular economy aims to conserve resources within economic cycles for as long as possible, reducing waste and the need for new raw materials. This model can decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, enhance climate resilience, contribute to social justice and economic prosperity, and accelerate progress towards the SDGs.

Several Arab countries have expressed their commitment to transitioning towards resource-efficient and environmentally sustainable economies through national strategies and action plans. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) conducted a survey of policies, initiatives, and projects related to circular economy concepts in the Arab region. This mapping exercise revealed active engagement by Arab states and stakeholders—including the private sector, NGOs, and civil society organizations—in promoting circular resource use across various sectors. ESCWA supports this transition by preparing a [policy brief](#) accelerating the transition, enhancing cooperation, and raising awareness. Additionally, ESCWA is developing guidelines to help policymakers mainstream circular economy principles, identify priority sectors, and propose actions to achieve circularity. The development of these guidelines responds to Resolution 651, adopted by the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment at its thirty-fourth session held in October 2023, inviting ESCWA to conduct a detailed study on the circular economy in the Arab region in collaboration with the Technical Secretariat of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment.

ESCWA and its partners have organized several regional multi-stakeholder meetings and consultative dialogues. These discussions have addressed technical requirements, political and governance frameworks, investment opportunities, and other crucial topics to accelerate the transition to a circular economy. A [consultative dialogue on accelerating this transition for climate resilience in the Arab region](#) highlighted the importance of strengthening regional cooperation, with the aim of progressing collectively in the transition, and experience-sharing within and outside the region to address differences and disparities among states.

The Technical Secretariat of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment, in collaboration with private sector companies, organized an event at the League of Arab States pavilion during COP 28. The event focused on establishing a platform to facilitate the region's transition to a green and circular economy. This initiative was announced by H.E. Ms. Razan Al-Mubarak, UN Climate Change High-Level Champion for the leadership team of COP28 United Arab Emirates. The platform aims to support the transition of governments in the region to a resilient, low-carbon circular economy through public-private partnerships, and the development of policies, regulations, and standards that promote the green and circular economy.

These efforts also align with the objectives of [Resolution 14 of the ministerial declaration of the United Nations Environment Assembly \(UNEA 6\)](#), which includes the commitment to implementing economic and environmental policies and models, including sustainable and circular economies and sustainable lifestyles, and calls on Member States and observer States to develop resource efficiency strategies and circular economy strategies.

Accordingly, ESCWA, in partnership with the Technical Secretariat of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment, and in collaboration with the Multinational Companies Business Group (MCBG) and the Circular Packaging Association (CPA), is organizing an online consultation meeting on 7 August 2024 to enhance regional cooperation in accelerating the transition to a circular economy in the Arab region. The meeting will present draft guidelines for integrating circular economy principles into development policies and programs, and discuss a concept note for establishing the platform. Additionally, the meeting will seek input from participating experts to refine these guidelines before presenting them to the Council at its next session.

II. Objectives

The objective of this consultative meeting is to discuss ways to enhance Arab regional cooperation in accelerating the transition towards a circular economy in the region. Additionally, it aims to develop a framework for regional knowledge-sharing in this field. Specifically, the meeting aims to:

- Discuss the importance of integrating the transition to a circular economy into public policies and development programs, and to present draft guidelines on this topic for the Arab region. These guidelines will benefit from feedback from participants.
- Explore proposals for mechanisms to strengthen cooperation and experience-sharing to accelerate the transition towards a circular economy in the Arab region. An intervention on this subject will be presented.

The meeting will generate recommendations on the guidelines and proposed cooperation mechanisms aimed at advancing the transition to a circular economy in the Arab region. These outcomes will be presented to the Technical Committee of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environment during its October 2024 meeting.

III. Participants and registration

Government experts from Arab states, and experts and members of civil society concerned with the circular economy and sustainable practices in the use of resources will participate in the consultative meeting,

as well as representatives of regional and international organizations and representatives of the private sector and academia.

Invited participants are kindly requested to complete their registration by **Sunday 4 August 2024** via Zoom Platform, through the following link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAscuqvqDssHNB5DKiEiOp6gDUpXSakW2AH>.

IV. Provisional Agenda

The consultative meeting will be held online on 7 August 2024, for two hours and fifteen minutes, from 11:00 am until 1:15 pm, Beirut time, through the Zoom platform. The agenda includes the following sessions in addition to the opening and closing sessions:

- Opening remarks
- Session 1:
 - Intervention on circular economy in the Arab region
 - Presentation and discussion of guidelines for integrating the transition towards a circular economy in the Arab region, with proposals for enhancement
- Session 2:
 - Presentation of the concept note for developing a platform to facilitate the transition towards a circular and green economy in the region
 - Exchange of views and proposals on mechanisms to gather regional experiences and enhance cooperation for the transition towards a circular economy in the Arab region
- Recommendation of the consultative meeting and closing remarks

Languages

The meeting will be held in Arabic and English. Simultaneous interpretation to and from Arabic and English is available.

V. Correspondence

Kindly contact the following focal points should you have any queries related to the meeting:

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