



GACERE

Global Alliance on
Circular Economy and
Resource Efficiency

High-Level Meeting 2023

Circular strategies and road maps

10 key take-aways

[World Circular Economy Forum](#), Helsinki, Finland, 31 May 2023

Watch the GACERE-led WCEF session on strategies and road maps at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZaEc41G_IHg



1. Panellists and moderator on stage during the GACERE High Level Meeting at the World Circular Economy Forum 2023

The [2023 GACERE High-Level Meeting](#) took place at the World Circular Economy Forum (WCEF) in Helsinki, Finland. The session was joined by a large audience of WCEF participants both physically (around 400 people) as well as online (over 600 views). The session involved a varied line up of speakers, who shared perspectives on the development, implementation and monitoring of roadmaps and strategies at the subnational, the national and the regional level:

- Opening remarks: **H.E. Dr. Diane Gashumba**, Ambassador of **Rwanda** to the Nordic countries
- Setting the Scene: **Mr Dmitry Mariyasin**, Deputy Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (**UNECE**)
- Moderator: **Mr. Stuart Mangold**, Senior Policy Advisor Africa and Bilateral Relations, Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, **South Africa**



- **Ms Astrid Schomaker**, Director for Global Sustainable Development, Directorate General for Environment, **European Commission**
- **Mr Ricardo Javier Torres Hernández**, Subsecretary of the Environment, Ministry of Sustainable Development, **Government of the State of Querétaro, Mexico**
- **Dr. Tho Nguyen Dinh**, Director General for the Institute of Strategy and Policy on Natural Resources and Environment, **Viet Nam**
- **Ms Leah Karrer**, Senior Circular Economy Officer, The Global Environment Facility (**GEF**)
- Closing remarks: **H.E. Ms Albina Ruiz Díaz**, Minister of Environment, **Peru**

This paper provides a summary of the key insights shared during the session:

1. Circular economy a powerful enabler to address the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.
2. Roadmaps and strategies are essential to operationalize and implement circular policies.
3. Robust and comparable metrics are crucial for monitoring circular roadmaps and strategies and ensuring accountability.
4. UNECE and partners lead on the development of Standardized Guidelines for Measuring Circularity.
5. Integration of circularity into regulatory frameworks, re-skilling the workforce and maintaining competitiveness in a globalized world require governments' strong commitment and support.
6. Prioritizing efforts is key when government capacity to support is limited.
7. Seed funding can attract additional investors when utilized to create an enabling policy environment.
8. Engaging the broad value chain, including the unusual suspects, greatly contribute to the successful implementation and uptake of circular road maps and strategies.
9. Co-creation is essential to successful circular road maps and strategies.
10. There is no one-size-fits-all approach, but platforms such as GACERE are needed for global conversations and knowledge sharing among countries.



Circular economy is a powerful enabler to address the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

“Circular economy is a key enabler in addressing the challenges of our time, encompassing nature and biodiversity loss, pollution and climate change”, stated Stuart Mangold, Senior Policy Advisor Africa and Bilateral Relations, Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, South Africa. Mr Ricardo Javier Torres Hernández, Subsecretary of the Environment, Ministry of Sustainable Development, Government of the State of Querétaro, Mexico, explained that *“[in Querétaro] **We wanted to move forward with our policy development and connect circular economy to the other policies of biodiversity and decarbonization. We have specific targets to achieve in these domains and we think that circular economy represents an extraordinary tool to achieve goals in these areas**”*. Viet Nam also highlighted how they associated circular economy with two goals: zero waste by 2050, and net zero emissions by 2050; they enhanced their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by leveraging circular economy to achieve their climate ambition. Specific goals on restoration and biodiversity are also integrated within their circularity agenda.



2. Mr. Stuart Mangold, Senior Policy Advisor Africa and Bilateral Relations, South Africa

Road maps and strategies are essential to operationalize and implement circular policies.

“We all have nice policies, and smart policies. But the most important thing, is implementation”, said H.E. Dr. Diane Gashumba, Ambassador of Rwanda to the Nordic countries. **Circular road maps and action plans play a pivotal role in driving policy implementation, concretizing the road ahead, providing a timeline for change, and translating policies into implementable actions and measurable targets.**



3. Her Excellency Dr. Diane Mashumba, Ambassador of Rwanda to the Nordic countries



Robust and comparable metrics are crucial for monitoring circular road maps and strategies and ensuring accountability.

“If you can’t measure it, you can’t really implement it, and you can’t keep policymakers accountable” stated Mr Dmitry Maryasin, Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). Measuring progress in a clear and comparable manner, based on reliable and harmonized data, is essential to operationalize circular strategies and road maps, as **this enables accountability, and steering towards impact.**



4. Mr. Dmitry Maryasin, Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

UNECE and partners lead on the development of Standardized Guidelines for Measuring Circularity

Standardized indicators for measuring circularity are key to harmonize efforts globally and compare progress towards circularity within and between countries and regions. In 2021, the Conference of European Statisticians tasked the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in collaboration with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) with developing guidelines for measuring the circular economy, in collaboration with partners, such as UNEP, Eurostat and IMF. The guidelines aim to support countries in producing relevant statistics and indicators to measure progress on circularity. A conceptual framework with underlying indicators has already been developed by the Task Force, based on concepts and terms in alignment with conventional statistical methods such as the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), the Economy-wide Material Flow Accounts (EW-MFA), and the System of National Accounts (SNA). It builds on four components:

- The full life cycle of materials, products and services
- Interactions with the environment (including natural resource stocks and environmental impacts on biodiversity, climate etc.)
- Derived socio-economic opportunities of circularity, and
- Policy responses (by governments, but also initiatives of businesses and civil society)

Indicators which are currently under development for each component are meant to support a coherent and internationally comparable approach to measuring circularity progress, and eventually become integrated in the methodologies employed by national statistics offices across the globe.



Integration of circularity into regulatory frameworks, re-skilling the workforce and maintaining competitiveness in a globalized world require governments' strong commitment and support.

Political commitment of governments is required to create the enabling conditions for circular road maps to have an impact. It should materialize with the integration of circularity into regulatory frameworks, economic and/or fiscal laws which not only incentivize stakeholders to transition to circularity, but also provide the required long-term visibility for them to embrace and invest in circular approaches. For instance, the state of Querétaro in Mexico started its circularity journey with the expansion of an Extended Producer Responsibility regulation and the instalment of a fee to companies per tonne of waste sent to landfills. In Viet Nam, the national law mandates all provinces to incorporate circular economy into their strategies, policies, and provincial. Nevertheless, when addressing diverse economies or sublevels, such as the EU with its 27 member countries or Viet Nam with its provinces, it is important to leave room for flexibility and tailoring to local contexts, while clearly defining the regulatory framework within which local and national governments operate. For instance, the European Union uses Directives that provide clear regulatory boundaries, while leaving flexibility to Member States to implement them within their countries.

Panellists also highlighted the challenges to implement circular roadmaps, where government support would be instrumental such as the **re-skilling of workers**: *“The circular economy is simply a different economy that requires different skills. It means there will also be losers, that can no longer do what they did in the past and that thus need to be re-trained”*, explained Ms Astrid Schomaker, Director for Global Sustainable Development, Directorate General for Environment, European Commission.



5. Ms Astrid Schomaker, Director for Global Sustainable Development, Directorate General for Environment, European Commission

She continued: *“At the European level we have come forward with quite a number of cross-cutting programmes to support Member countries in doing this reskilling of the workforce”*. **The issue of maintaining competitiveness for businesses in a globalized world** was also outlined: as countries move at different pace, the private sector may face difficulties in integrating an international market, where circular front runners have to compete with companies operating under conventional business models.



Prioritizing efforts is key when government capacity to support is limited.

The financial capacity to support the development of implementation of circular road maps is a persisting limiting factor. Speakers highlighted the need to **set clear priorities and focus on specific value chains and targets** in the first years, rather than attempting to tackle everything at once. *“It is crucial to set priorities. If finance and capacities are limited, you should focus to still be able to address the accounting, auditing and monitoring of the circular roadmap”*, explained Dr. Tho Nguyen Dinh, Director General for the Institute of Strategy and Policy on Natural Resources and Environment, Viet Nam.



6. Dr Tho Nguyen Dinh, Director General for the Institute of Strategy and Policy on Natural Resources and the Environment, Viet Nam

Seed funding can attract additional investors when utilized to create an enabling policy environment.

Ms Leah Karrer, Senior Circular Economy Officer of the Global Environmental Facility, suggested to **strategically invest available funds, albeit limited, to create the right enabling conditions to transform the market through policies, regulations, standards, and incentives**: *“this makes traditional investors more willing to step in as risk is lowered and they can see there are standards and regulations in place that create a level playing field and drive the market”*. This type of seed funding can be used as a catalyst to attract more funding, as it reduces the risk for traditional investors and makes the landscape more attractive for them to step in.



7. Ms Leah Karrer, Senior Circular Economy Officer, Global Environmental Facility

Engaging the broad value chain, including the unusual suspects, greatly contribute to the successful implementation and uptake of circular road maps and strategies.

The shift to a circular economy requires a broad engagement of value chain stakeholders: *“we really need to think about who are those stakeholders along the value chains, and **particularly think about the unusual suspects**. For example in fashion, we should not stop with the designers and the retail shops, but also include the farmers and the seamstresses, who are part of the solution of repair. We need a broad audience and need to talk to each of their interests too, not only to the environmental benefits”*, says Ms Leah Karrer.



Co-creation is essential to successful circular road maps and strategies.

Co-creation of the circular road maps and strategies with all relevant stakeholders, including businesses, finance, citizens and other social actors, is critical for their successful uptake. This engagement fosters a sense of ownership, as described by Mr Ricardo Javier Torres Hernández. In the state of Querétaro, the government provides funding to businesses to support them in the development of circular strategies, based on opportunities and circular projects companies have identified themselves.

This high engagement has led the private sector in Querétaro to explicitly prefer mandatory regulations to accelerate the transition to circularity, as they consider circular business models as an opportunity to increase competitiveness. *“200 companies already joined the programme, as they see opportunities in participating. Other stakeholders coming from civil society are also getting strongly engaged.*

Not only do these stakeholders contribute, but they are also the essence of the circular economy roadmap”, explained Mr Ricardo Javier Torres Hernández. He continued:

“Circular economy is a messenger from the future; it is a new way of developing our countries, and there is an opportunity to get people involved in this new era. Roadmaps should be flexible, negotiable and dynamic; not as an official document, but as a document by the citizens. (...). We are going to disconnect the economy from natural resources and empower people instead”.



5. Mr Ricardo Javier Torres Hernández, Subsecretary of the Environment, Ministry of Sustainable Development, Government of the State of Querétaro, Mexico

There is no one-size-fits-all approach, but platforms such as GACERE are needed for global conversations and knowledge sharing among countries.

Circular economy implementation does not have a one-size-fits-all approach; however, sharing learnings and good practices across countries is essential. H.E. Ms Albina Ruiz Díaz, Minister of Environment of Peru highlighted the recent efforts of Peru to develop a circular road map, incorporating a wide range of sectors: *“to support this process it is crucial to find spaces and mechanisms such as GACERE to share experiences and best practices, in which countries like Peru, who have started the development of their Circular Roadmaps or Strategies **can learn from***



6. Ms. Albina Ruiz Díaz, Minister of Environment of Peru



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other countries, who may have different contexts, but the same ambitions to maintain harmony with our planet, for the benefit of the people”.

This was also stressed by Ms Astrid Schomaker: *“I would like to challenge GACERE to become a hub for circular strategies and roadmaps: we do not have to invent those from scratch every time because they are already out there. Different experiences can all come together in GACERE, where we can talk about them and learn. If you are not yet member of GACERE, consider joining”.*

About GACERE: GACERE is an alliance of governments at global level willing to work together on and advocate for a global just circular economy transition and a more sustainable management of natural resources, at the political level and in multilateral fora. GACERE was launched in February 2021.

GACERE is an initiative of the European Commission on behalf of the European Union and UNEP, in coordination with UNIDO. To date, the following countries have already joined the Global Alliance: Canada, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, the European Union, India, Japan, Kenya, Morocco, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, Republic of Korea, Rwanda, South Africa and Switzerland. The work of GACERE is supported by strategic partners: the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, the Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy (PACE), the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), the World Circular Economy Forum (WCEF).

More information about GACERE is available at: www.unep.org/gacere