



AFRICAN
CIRCULAR
ECONOMY
ALLIANCE

African Circular Economy Alliance (ACEA)

Briefing Note to the AMCEN on ACEA Progress and the World Circular Economy Forum 2022 (WCEF2022)

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Background of the ACEA

During the World Economic Forum on Africa that took place in Rwanda in 2016, the idea for the African Circular Economy Alliance (“ACEA” or “Alliance”) was conceived as a platform for African countries to spur the transition to a circular economy that delivers economic development, jobs, and positive environmental outcomes. The Alliance was eventually launched during the 23rd United Nations Conference of Parties (COP23) by the Governments of South Africa, Nigeria and Rwanda. The 17th Conference of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), which took place in November 2019 in South Africa, called for support for the circular ACEA.

For African countries, circular solutions can be leveraged to attain various climate action obligations and sustainable development goals. This is an opportunity to effectively tackle multifaceted issues such as poverty, poor infrastructure, and unemployment, among other factors that have hindered economic growth. This was further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as most countries on the continent do not have the necessary buffers to withstand the shocks it induced. The ACEA aims to serve as a convening platform that supports the circular economy transition at the national, regional, and continental levels through various interventions. These include sharing best practices for creating legal and regulatory framework; advocating for and raising awareness of the circular economy and bringing collaborations within individual or multiple countries to increase financing and design innovative circular economy projects.

Rwanda, Nigeria, and South Africa currently serve as Co-chairs of the Alliance. Other member countries of the Alliance include Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Burkina Faso, Sudan, and Morocco. The Alliance is supported by strategic partners, including the World Economic Forum (WEF), the African Development Bank (AfDB), UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Government of Finland, the European Commission, African Circular Economy Network (ACEN) and the Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economic (PACE).

Overview of ACEA strategy and journey so far

In 2020, the Secretariat of the ACEA was set up after the African Development Bank agreed to serve as its host. With funding from the World Economic Forum and the Danish Development Agency, Dalberg, an international development consulting firm, was contracted to lead the activities of the ACEA secretariat and support defining the strategy and work programme of the Alliance within the first year.

One of the first responsibilities of the ACEA secretariat was to conduct market research to identify the circular economy baseline and market gaps/opportunities on the African continent. The research objective was to inform the development of robust interventions and programs that will guide the ACEA’s work in its member countries. As a fallout of the research, five opportunity areas were identified to transition Africa to a circular economy development model that enables economic growth, job creation, and environmental conservation. These areas include food systems, packaging, built environment, fashion, and electronics; all referred to as the “5 Big Bets”. Based on the research findings and in line with the Alliance’s mission, a strategy was drawn out for the Secretariat's activities to achieve short-term and long-term goals.

In line with the defined strategy, the Alliance has engaged in activities and made significant progress in delivering its mandate, including:

- Conducting market research to identify gaps and opportunities for CE in Africa (the 5 Big Bets).
- Operationalizing Working Groups to support the scale-up of industries along the 5 Big Bets.

- Conducting research for CE opportunities, specifically in mining and plastic.
- Designing a platform for a Business Support Programme for circular solutions on the African continent.
- Raising awareness through events such as the World Circular Economy Forum in 2020, ACEA's annual event on the side-lines of WCEF + Climate in 2021 and this year, as hosts of the WCEF 2022 in Africa
- Launching a website (<https://www.aceaafrica.org>) to serve as a knowledge resource for stakeholders as well as a platform for engaging with new members, partners and collaborators.
- Elaborating a policy brief for the scale-up of regional circular value chains. The Co-chairs approved the recommendations, which touch upon five key areas (regulations, financing, education, advocacy & skills development, innovation and data management, and partnerships).
- Supporting external initiatives and projects for greater collaboration and compounded impact.
- Internally, the Alliance has leveraged its network of strategic partners to implement interventions in line with the ACEA mandate.

The World Circular Economy Forum 2022 (WCEF2022)

The World Circular Economy Forum (WCEF) is a global initiative of Finland and the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra. Every year, the Forum brings together over 4,000 business leaders, policymakers, and experts from around the world to present the world's best circular economy solutions. WCEF examines how businesses can seize new opportunities and gain a competitive advantage through circular economy solutions and how governments can implement the circular economy in their context to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

Since its launch in 2017, WCEF has been hosted in Asia (Japan), Europe (Finland and Netherlands) and North America (Canada). African representation at the Forum was strengthened in 2019, when the Government of Finland invited a delegation of government representatives, practitioners, entrepreneurs, and financiers led by Dr. Anthony Nyong, Director for Climate Change & Green Growth at the African Development Bank and attended by H.E. Vincent Biruta, Rwandan Minister of Environment. Since 2020, the African Circular Economy Alliance has taken up the torch by hosting three events as part of the Forum and organizing its 2021 Annual Meeting on the sideline of WCEF+Climate. At the same time, the CE agenda has evolved steadily on the continent over the past years, emerging as a promising model for a just transition to low-carbon and climate-resilient development, in line with the UN SDGs and the objectives of the Paris Agreement.

This year, the WCEF2022 will be hosted on the African continent and the Global South for the first time. The African Circular Economy Alliance is currently leading the preparations for the Forum. The Alliance's strategic partnerships are being leveraged to support the organization of WCEF, and the Ministry of Environment of Rwanda, one of the Co-chairs of the African Circular Economy Alliance has agreed for the Forum to be hosted in Kigali, Rwanda.

A call for additional country members on ACEA and for participation at the WCEF2022

The 17th Conference of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), which took place in November 2019 in South Africa, called for support for the circular ACEA. Since then, quite a lot

of progress has been achieved in fostering the transition to a circular economy on the continent and building relevant partnerships for this transition. Additionally, as circular economy is one of the priority areas of the African Green Stimulus Programme (AGSP) that was endorsed by the 2022 AU Heads of States Summit for Africa's post COVID-19 recovery, the ACEA and AGSP intend to seek areas of synergies. **As such, the ACEA would like to make a call to African countries that are yet to be members to join the Alliance to strengthen the continental coalition to drive the circular economy agenda forward.**

Furthermore, the World Circular Economy Forum will be hosted on the African soil for the first time this year. Beyond that, the conversations and engagements there would revolve around how a circular economy can become a strong contributor to national development in the African context. It is therefore pertinent to have the representation of the critical ministries at the Forum. **The ACEA wishes to make a call to the Ministers at the AMCEN meeting to participate and/or follow the conversations at the WCEF2022.**