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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
No. Cion doc.:	5117/21
Subject:	Global Alliance on Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency (GACERE): Final version as approved at the launch event of 22 February in 2021 in the margins of the first segment of the 5th meeting of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-5.1)

Delegations will find attached the final version of the Global Alliance on Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency (GACERE) as approved at the launch event of the Alliance on 22 February 2021 in the margins of UNEA-5.1.

It is recalled that the Council authorised the Commission on 9 February 2021 following a written procedure, to launch GACERE, as set out in document 5117/21, on behalf of the EU in the margins of UNEA-5.1.

The Commission submits the final version of GACERE to the Council pursuant to the Arrangements on non-binding instruments (NBI) (doc. 15367/17), which foresee that:

"After signature or agreement, a copy of the final text as signed (in all language versions if there is more than one) must be sent to the Council."

Concept Note
Global Alliance on Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency
(GACERE)
Towards Just Transitions

1. Policy context

In its report *Global Resources Outlook 2019*¹, the International Resource Panel (IRP) estimates that the world's material resources² extraction and processing accounts for more than 90% of global biodiversity and water stress impacts, approximately half of global greenhouse gas emissions (not including climate impacts related to land use), and about one third of the health impacts due to particulate matter. These results illustrate the central role of resource management to facilitate the achievement of goals under e.g. the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement, and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) has noted that, in a circular economy, 'products and materials are designed in such a way that they can be reused, remanufactured recycled or recovered and thus maintained in the economy for as long as possible, along with the resources of which they are made, and the generation of waste, especially hazardous waste, is avoided or minimised, and greenhouse gas emissions are prevented or reduced'³. The Assembly has also adopted a number of other resolutions related to circularity and resource efficiency⁴.

The interconnections between climate change, biodiversity loss, overconsumption of resources, waste generation are now well recognized, as are the consequences from the associated impacts to people such as environmental injustices, social inequity and work opportunities. A just transition⁵ is key to ensuring that no one is left behind, neither countries nor people as a result of economic transformations. A just transition framework for the circular economy can identify opportunities that reduce waste and stimulate product innovation, while at the same time contributing positively to sustainable human development, ensuring that no one is left behind⁶ and to sustainable growth and jobs. International cooperation to create effective and fair governance mechanisms, and policy coordination at regional, national and local levels will play an important role in shaping such a just transition⁷.

¹ IRP (2019), *Global Resources Outlook 2019*, p. 68; IRP (2019), *Global Resources Outlook 2019. Summary for Policymakers*, pp. 15-17.

² Biomass (including food crops), metals, minerals, and fossil fuels.

³ Resolution 4/1 'Innovative pathways to achieve sustainable consumption and production'.

⁴ Including Resolution 4/2 'Promoting sustainable practices and innovative solutions for curbing food loss and waste', 4/4 'Addressing environmental challenges through sustainable business practices', 4/6 'Marine Plastic Litter and Microplastics', 4/8 'Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste', 4/9: 'Addressing Single-use Plastic Products Pollution', and 4/19 'Mineral resource governance'.

⁵ A transition that ensures environmental sustainability, decent work, social inclusion and poverty eradication. See ILO (2015), [Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies](#); OECD (2017), [Just transition](#).

⁶ Chatham House (2020), [Promoting a Just Transition to an Inclusive Circular Economy](#), p. 2.

⁷ *Ibid.*

There are a number of initiatives that either have as an explicit objective the transition towards a global circular economy or are contributing to it. These include the World Circular Economy Forum⁸ (WCEF), the Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy⁹ (PACE), the Partnership for Action on Green Economy¹⁰ (PAGE), and the 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns / One Planet Network (10YFP/OPN)¹¹. There are also regional initiatives, such as the African Circular Economy Alliance, and the Regional Coalition on Circular Economy of Latin America and the Caribbean. What is, however, missing is an alliance of governments at global level, supported by stakeholders, willing to work together on and advocate for a global just circular economy transition and a more sustainable management of natural resources (material resources included), at the political level and in multilateral fora. These fora include, in particular, the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), and the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

2. Working areas of the Alliance

In view of the above, the Alliance would:

- a) Advocate for a global just transition to a resource efficient and circular economy for a more equitable use of resources to achieve sustainable consumption and production, thus contributing to the Paris Agreement goals, halting and reversing biodiversity loss, and curbing pollution and waste.
- b) Undertake a mapping of domestic policies, fiscal and regulatory frameworks on the sustainable management of natural resources, the circular economy transition and industrial symbiosis, building on relevant information. A particular focus would be on policies and regulatory frameworks that have proved successful in supporting just transition policies and practices contributing positively to sustainable human development and ensuring that no one is left behind.
- c) Identify barriers, knowledge and governance gaps that hinder circular and just transitions, bottlenecks in decoupling economic growth from resource use, biodiversity loss, and greenhouse gas emissions at the international and global level, and possible opportunities for making global value chains greener, more resource efficient and circular.
- d) Identify research needs¹² and possible global governance improvements that could help governments and stakeholders to address such barriers and bottlenecks, including concerning specific resources.
- e) Take forward and support sectoral, bilateral and/or regional¹³ partnerships for the circular economy transition to disseminate best practices while making sure not duplicating efforts.
- f) Facilitate more global conversations on the governance of natural resources and options to improve the current situation, including through the wider adoption of more resource efficient and circular approaches.

⁸ <https://www.sitra.fi/en/projects/wcef/>.

⁹ <https://pacecircular.org/>.

¹⁰ <https://www.un-page.org/>.

¹¹ <https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/>.

¹² For example concerning metrics and indicators for circularity, contributing to a common understanding towards measuring how circular economies are and which progress we aim at achieving at global and regional levels.

¹³ E.g. the African Circular Economy Alliance, and the Regional Coalition on Circular Economy of Latin America and the Caribbean.

3. Working arrangements

Bringing together governments and relevant networks and organisations, the Alliance would provide the global impetus for initiatives related to the circular economy transition, resource efficiency and sustainable consumption and production, building on efforts being deployed internationally, including by the G7 Alliance on Resource Efficiency and the G20 Resource Efficiency Dialogue.

The Alliance would gather:

- Governments that are willing to take the leadership in advancing on circular economy and resource efficiency to achieve sustainable consumption and production (SDG12). The members are represented by the authorities that are responsible for and are in charge of developing policies and initiatives in their respective jurisdiction.
- International organisations, including UN agencies, funds and programmes, that play a key role in accelerating the achievement of sustainable consumption and production as well as natural resource management and want to support a global just transition to a resource efficient and circular economy as a means to a more equitable use of resources for achieving sustainable development.

And would also gather:

- Circular economy stakeholder platforms at regional level to increase consistency and cooperation with and among existing platforms.
- Business leaders, professional associations and industrial clusters who want to seize the opportunities offered by the circular economy model for the improving resource efficiency of their businesses, thus contributing to decoupling the world's economic growth from environmental degradation.
- Environmental NGOs, civil society organisations and representatives of Indigenous Peoples who want to provide their expertise on circular economy practices contributing to sustainable consumption and production, and better natural resource management.
- Relevant international networks and initiatives¹⁴, as their participation will ensure optimal information sharing and complementarity.

High-level representatives of the Alliance's members intend to meet once a year¹⁵ to decide on priorities and monitor progress. Expert representatives of the members could meet when necessary, preferably remotely, to advance the Alliance's work and implement the agreed priorities.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) would provide support to the Alliance's operations. Cooperation with other international organisations and UN agencies, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank (WB), and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), could be considered.

¹⁴ For example the World Circular Economy Forum and the Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy.

¹⁵ Possibly back-to-back with the WCEF in the even years and with UNEA in the odd years.

Members of the Alliance are listed in the Annex. The list therein is expected to evolve with time.

4. Disclaimer

This concept note does not, nor is it intended to, create any binding, legal or financial obligations under international or domestic law.

Done at Nairobi (online) on 22 February 2021

**Members of the
Global Alliance on Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency
(GACERE)**

(In alphabetical order)

Canada
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Chile
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Colombia
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European Union
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Japan
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Kenya
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New Zealand
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Nigeria
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Norway
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Peru
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Rwanda
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South Africa
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United Nations Environment Programme
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United Nations Industrial Development Organization
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