



Concept Note and Agenda

Accelerator Session: The RESCUE Initiative in the ECO Region:

Goals, Opportunities, and Challenges

This accelerator session is part of the [World Circular Economy Forum 2025 \(WCEF2025\)](#), bringing global experts together to drive circular economy solutions.

Date and Time: Thursday, May 15, 2025, from 6:30 AM to 8:00 AM (São Paulo local time, GMT-3)

Place: Online. Link to be provided upon [registration](#) completion.

Objective:

The session is organized jointly by the [United Nations Industrial Development Organisation](#) (UNIDO) and the [Economic Cooperation Organization](#) (ECO) to bring together diverse stakeholders to explore and unlock the potential of the circular economy transition within selected Caucasus, South, West and Central Asian countries-members of ECO (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), focusing on the goals of the [Regional Initiative on Resource Efficiency, Sustainability, and Circular Economy](#) (RESCUE), launched in 2024 during COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan. This exercise will thus take up how the RESCUE could contribute to positioning the ECO region as a proponent of a just, inclusive, and sustainable transition to circularity and lower-carbon economies in the international arena. This [accelerator session](#) aims to serve as a catalyst for sustainable economic transformation, through the efficient and circular use of materials and other natural resources, unlocking the economic, social and environmental potential of the circular economy in the ECO region, highlighting the role of international assistance in driving the implementation of the RESCUE Initiative and providing policy recommendations to forge regional partnerships through circular solutions.

Context and Rationale:

The circular economy model looks promising for the ECO region. The homogeneity of existing traditional linear economic models in its Member States; sluggish pace of productivity catch-up to advanced economy levels; the interconnectivity of supply chains; need for well-targeted policies to reignite productivity growth, diversification, human capital and efficient infrastructure; and other factors call upon strong regional collaboration in this area. ECO region requires a cohesive and collaborative approach to accelerate circularity at a systemic level.

ECO Member States have recently started to grasp the importance of the circular transition. The regional uptake and a supportive approach demonstrate solidarity among countries of the ECO region, which are predominantly endowed with hydrocarbons or other mineral resources and traditionally pursue linear economic model policies, to gradually change the established practices and stereotypes.

The accelerator session is designed to catalyze sustainable economic transformation by unlocking the potential of the circular economy in the ECO region. It will highlight the role of international



assistance in driving the implementation of the RESCUE Initiative, fostering collaboration among stakeholders, and paving the way for a resource-efficient and regenerative economy.

The RESCUE Initiative overview:

RESCUE is a collaborative initiative launched by the ECO to contribute to a more sustainable, circular and regenerative economic models among its Member States in the region. Its overarching objective is to establish a regional cooperation platform that advocates for a just transition to a resource-efficient, circular, and regenerative economy. This initiative seeks ways and means to support coherent policies for circularity and more sustainable management of natural resources, aligning with global sustainability trends and addressing challenges unique to the ECO region. The RESCUE initiative was officially launched during the UN Climate Change Conference (COP29) on November 16, 2024, in Baku, Azerbaijan, as part of the COP29 Presidency Events. RESCUE has the potential to create in the long run a more sustainable future by balancing environmental, economic, and social well-being in the ECO region and benefit the region as a whole through positive impacts on resource efficiency and recovery, waste reduction, climate change mitigation, biodiversity conservation, sustainable and innovative materials, job creation, community engagement, social equity, cost savings, innovation, and new business models.

Expected Outcomes:

- Enhanced awareness of the circular economy's potential to contribute to climate action and sustainable and resilient economic development in the ECO region;
- Identification of key opportunities and challenges specific to the region;
- Strengthened networks among stakeholders for future collaboration; and
- Showcasing the perspectives of the RESCUE Initiative and identification of key elements for a future collaborative roadmap for its advancement, including resource mobilization.

Target Audience:

The session seeks to bring together a wide range of stakeholders across the world that advocates circular economy to collectively call for scaling up relevant transformational actions in the ECO region. The participants may include policymakers, government officials, high level representatives of international organizations, different fora, initiatives and alliances, research scientists and representatives from academia, private sector and businesses, as well as other relevant stakeholders and the interested audience engaged in the relevant theme from various sectors.



Draft Agenda

Time (San Paulo, Brazil) (a.m.)	Description
6:30 – 6:35	Welcome Address and Introductory Remarks by UNIDO The representative from UNIDO will set the tone for the session, emphasizing the significance of the transition to a circular economy in the ECO region, and the critical role of the international support in this regard.
6:35 – 6:45	Presentation of the RESCUE Initiative by Excellency Secretary-General Dr. Khan ECO (TBC) Why: Benefits of transitioning to a circular economy for the ECO region Current state: Status of circular economy initiatives in the ECO region: examples of successful implementation Solution: Goals, purposes, and plans of the RESCUE initiative
6:45 – 6:55	Circular Economy: context and application – opportunity for ECO Member States Dr. Rene van Berkel, Member, International Resource Panel (IRP) and International Faculty, School of Global Studies, Thammasat University (Thailand) Keynote/introduction: Opportunities for government to navigate and advance the circular economy for climate action and sustainable and resilient socio-economic development.
6:55-7:45	Panel Discussion: Circular Economy Prospects in ECO Region - Goals, Opportunities, and Challenges Moderator: Dr. Rene van Berkel Topic 1: Circular economy good practices and examples (20 min) Panelists: • Ms. Tatiana Chernyavskaya, UNIDO Project Manager • Dr.Ing. Ricardo Seidl da Fonseca, UNIDO Senior Expert • Dr Shafqat Munir, Deputy Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan • Mr. Arman Khorsand, Head of the Center for International Affairs and Convention Department of Environment of the Islamic Republic of Iran (TBC) • Ms. Ece Dinsel, Expert, Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change of the Republic of Türkiye Guiding questions: • What good practices of circular economy adoption do already exist? • What appear in your experience as the key barriers towards circular economy?



	Topic 2: Capacity Building and Enabling Environment (15 min) Moderator: Ms. Tatiana Chernyavskaya Panelists: • Mr. Bob Hoogendoorn, R&D Director, Circle Economy • Mr. Hannes Mac Nulty, Manager, Green Industry Platform • Mr. Sabit Zeyniyev, Deputy Chairman of Executive Board, Clean City Azerbaijan • Ms. Almira Azhibekova, Chief Expert of the Waste Management Department, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan (TBC). Guiding questions: • From your organization's perspective, what examples of capacity building could you highlight? What have been the lessons learned? • What policy measures are in your organization's view a priority to start of circular economy transition? • What suggestions would you have to get stakeholders involved, in particular businesses and communities? Topic 3: Financing for Circular Economy (15 min) Moderator: Dr. Rene van Berkel Panelists: • Mr. Maxim Titov, Research Fellow at the Energy Politics and International Relations Research Center (ENERPO) • Mr. Batley Waqas, Head - High Impact Partnership for Climate Action (HIPCA), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development • Mr. Garik Arabyan, Head of Energy Sector Projects at Eurasian Fund for Stabilization and Development (EFSD) (TBC). Guiding questions: • What makes circular economy financing different from linear economy financing? • How do you see the role of international finance, including climate and other impact finance, to leverage investments in the circular economy? ○ What can countries do to pave the way for scaled up investments in circular economy?
7:45 – 7:55	Q&A Session Participants can pose questions to panelists, fostering interactive discussions and clarifications.



7:55 – 8:00	Closing Remarks by Mr. Çağatay Emrah Öngüt, Deputy Secretary-General, ECO (TBC) Summarizing key takeaways and outlining the next steps for advancing the RESCUE Initiative in the ECO region.
-------------	--