
Submission by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in relation to the sixth global dialogue under the Sharm el-Sheikh mitigation ambition and implementation work programme

The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) welcomes the opportunity to present information on enabling mitigation solutions through circular economy, drawing on national and regional experience, for the sixth global dialogue under the Sharm el-Sheikh mitigation ambition and implementation work programme in accordance with decision 4/CMA.4, para 14.

I. Introduction

1. UNIDO has been actively promoting circular economy as a viable solution to global challenges, including the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, ocean pollution, and resource and ecosystem degradation. A UNIDO-led policy brief on SDG 13, presented during the High-Level Political Forum in 2021, highlights circular economy as a paradigm shift in the approach to production and consumption in the economic system that embeds environmental sustainability.
2. The adoption of circular economy principles has become a strategic priority for UNIDO, as recognized by the General Conference through resolutions GC.18/Res.1 and GC.18/Res.7, which call on the Organization to support industries in adopting energy- and resource-efficient manufacturing practices, innovative design, and extended product lifespan management.
3. In May 2021, UNIDO convened the first round of global consultations on circular economy, co-chaired by Ministers of Austria and Costa Rica, to facilitate exchanges on good practices, emerging innovations and the promotion and adoption of circular economy principles and practices by industries of Member States, particularly in developing countries, as well as to identify barriers and devise action-oriented solutions.
4. With circular economy being recognized by the UN General Assembly and referenced in its resolutions on industrial development cooperation, and further building on the successes and lessons learned from the 2021 global consultations, UNIDO hosted a Development Dialogue on circular economy in June 2025 to strengthen Member States' engagement toward the development of a dedicated UNIDO circular economy strategy.
5. UNIDO's Climate Change Strategy (IDB.51/Dec.8) further underlines the need to maximize synergies between climate action and circular economy, positioning the Organization to influence discourse at the intersection of inclusive, sustainable industrial development and environmental resilience.

6. The Industrial Development Board, at its 53rd session held in July 2025, urged UNIDO to further expand its portfolio of circular economy initiatives and actively engage in relevant intergovernmental processes.

II. Programmes in technical cooperation and policy advisory services

7. In the electronics sector, the GEF-funded Global Electronics Management programme seeks to create an enabling environment which includes policy strengthening, capacity building, sound infrastructures, circular design and access to finance, for responsible electronics management in 16 developing countries.

8. In the minerals and chemicals sector, the UNIDO-GEF GEMINI programme promotes the mercury-free production and supply of non-ferrous metals in six countries. UNIDO's Global Greenchem Innovation and Network Programme, executed by Yale University and funded by the GEF, established the first global network platform to accelerate research, innovation, and commercialization of sustainable chemical processes and products. In the artisanal small-scale gold mining sector, UNIDO's GEF-funded projects lead and facilitate the introduction of clean technologies and policy reforms to minimize the use and discharges of mercury.

9. The Chemicals and Waste Financing Partnership Facility, a GEF project co-implemented with the Asian Development Bank, will create a dedicated finance facility to support net-zero, nature-positive investments in selected Asian cities, leveraging UNIDO's circular economy and sustainable chemicals expertise alongside ADB's innovative financing capacity.

10. Under the GEF's integrated programme on circular solutions to plastic pollution, UNIDO has implemented child projects in India, Morocco, the Philippines, and South Africa, focusing on greener product design and reducing upstream and midstream plastic leakage. Thanks to Japanese funding, UNIDO supports Egypt, Fiji, Nigeria in further demonstrating circular and resource-efficient solutions in the plastics supply chain, banning single use plastic while offering sustainable alternatives, mitigating plastic pollution through enabling environments as well as public-private collaboration.

11. The construction sector is addressed through GEF-funded projects in the Philippines and Brazil, as well as dedicated initiatives in Costa Rica and Morocco. In Costa Rica and Morocco, projects have promoted sustainable construction materials and practices; in Brazil, efforts have targeted the reduction of industrial emissions in the cement sector, aligning with multilateral environmental agreements to advance low-carbon, pollution-free building sectors. UNIDO's approach is focused on detoxification and decarbonization (greening of industry) through innovation in eco-designs and engagement of various stakeholders in promoting circularity.

12. The flagship Global Eco-Industrial Parks Programme, implemented in partnership with Switzerland, has facilitated 18 national policies, reduced 118,000 tons of CO₂e emissions, and trained 2,283 staff from park management in 21 industrial parks. Interventions in Colombia, Egypt, Indonesia, Peru, South Africa, Ukraine, and Viet Nam have focused on strengthening national circularity policies and providing technical assistance.

13. In the fashion and textile sectors, UNIDO promotes circularity in supply chains through the elimination of hazardous chemicals, circularity, resource efficient and cleaner production practices and through innovation and adoption of sustainable alternatives. UNIDO is a member of the UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion and participates in the UNFCCC Fashion Charter, which is an industry-led effort to collectively identify ways in which the broader textile, clothing and fashion industry can drive the industry to net-zero emissions by 2050. The European Union-funded Switch2CE programme in Bangladesh continues to build capacity for a circular transition in the national textile and garment sector. This programme also established refurbishment centers for ICT/electronics in Egypt, and, in Morocco, strengthens the circularity of the plastic value chains jointly with the private sector. GEF support in the SADC region has promoted sustainable management of chemicals and waste in textile supply chains.

14. Building on the successes of the EU-funded SwitchMed programme, which delivered tools and services directly to the private sector, the EU-funded Green Forward Industry programme aims to strengthen green competitiveness of SMEs in eight southern Mediterranean countries (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the State of Palestine, and Tunisia), supporting shifts to green and circular models, job creation, decarbonization, and climate resilience. Similarly, the EU4Green Recovery East programme, which follows the EU4Environment programme, is advancing circular economy in the Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine) through policy reforms, capacity development, and investment facilitation in environment and climate resilience.

15. In the agro-food sector, UNIDO aims to support green growth and circular economy practices in sustainable agriculture and food production, through resource efficient and cleaner production and waste valorization. A Swiss-funded project in Egypt aims to promote market system changes to support MSMEs and build the knowledge and capacity of firms to scale innovative solutions, and of institutions and policymakers to develop market-driven service offerings. Similarly, in Lebanon with funding from the EU, UNIDO partners with over 50 food and beverage companies to create momentum for green and circular production.

16. Through its TEST integrated methodology, UNIDO has been supporting the private sector of its Member States to increase resource, and in particular water, efficiency while reducing pollution loads discharged into water bodies. These water-focused efforts are

complemented by nature-based initiatives contributing to climate adaptation, resilience and biodiversity protection.

17. UNIDO's participation in the GEF-funded iCOAST programme is one of its first sustainable tourism initiatives, representing an opportunity to contribute to greening several supply chains ranging from food and beverages to cooling systems and critical minerals for energy transition.

III. Global dialogues and partnerships

18. Launched in 2013 as a response to the call at Rio+20, the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) is a prominent alliance of five UN agencies, eight funding partners, and 22 partner countries that work together to transform economies into drivers of sustainability and create lasting change embedded in national policies and institutions. As one of the five UN agencies, UNIDO's contribution to PAGE focuses on industrial policy advice and its implementation through industry engagement, industry-related training and the development of public-private partnerships.

19. Launched in Nairobi in February 2021, the Global Alliance on Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency (GACERE) brings together Global South and Global North countries, as well as strategic partners, networks, and organizations. As an alliance of governments at the global level, GACERE currently includes 17 member countries and the EU. Funded by the EU and Norway, it works to advocate for a global just circular economy transition and a more sustainable management of natural resources (including material resources), at the political level and in multilateral fora. UNIDO supports GACERE's efforts in coordination with UNEP.

20. At the fifth meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution in Busan (November–December 2024), UNIDO supported a side event on circular plastic product design, raising awareness of circular economy's benefits for pollution prevention

21. In May 2025, at the World Circular Economy Forum in São Paulo, UNIDO hosted a booth showcasing its circular economy projects, led two sessions on concrete solutions accelerating circularity and symbiotic relationships in industry, conducted workshops on eco-industrial parks and circular design for plastics, and led an accelerator session on circular economy for green recovery, concluding with a meeting on EU-funded green initiatives.



III. Conclusion

22. Looking ahead, UNIDO stands ready to collaborate with UNFCCC and other partners at all levels to integrate circular economy into climate action frameworks, to support Member States in designing and, importantly, implementing national strategies, and to mobilize finance for circular solutions. As the lead UN agency for sustainable industrial development, UNIDO remains committed to advancing global solutions and fostering a resilient, inclusive industrial future, by championing resource efficiency, waste reduction, and innovative business models.

23. UNIDO expresses its full commitment to supporting the upcoming sixth global dialogue on enabling mitigation solutions in the waste sector, including through circular approaches, drawing on national and regional experiences.