

Committee: Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Issue: Addressing the challenges of a transition to a green and circular economy in developing countries

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PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

Hello and welcome! I am thrilled to be your student officer for this Model UN conference. My name is Athanasios Ntatsis but please just call me Thanasi. I am excited to work with all of you on addressing the challenges of transitioning to a green and circular economy in developing countries.

I have always been enthusiastic about making a positive impact on the environment and promoting sustainable practices. That is why I am particularly excited about the topics we will be discussing during this conference. Together, we have the power to shape a better future for our planet.

My fellow chairs and I want this to be a space where everyone feels comfortable sharing their ideas and opinions. Let us work together to find innovative solutions and create a resolution that represents the diverse perspectives of our countries in our committee. Throughout the conference, we will be here to support you and help guide our discussions. We honestly believe that each one of you has something valuable to contribute and are looking forward to seeing your creativity and critical thinking in action.

So, let us make the most of this opportunity to gain experience, collaborate, and make a difference. I am confident that we can achieve wonderful things together. Feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions or need assistance. My email is athanasiosntatsisedu@gmail.com

Thank you for being part of this Model UN conference, and I hope we will have an amazing time!

Kind regards,

Athanasios Ntatsis.

INTRODUCTION

In an era of growing global environmental concerns and an urgent need for sustainable development, the concept of a green and circular economy has evolved as a transformative approach to addressing today's difficulties. This study guide intends to investigate the obstacles and opportunities involved with developing countries' transition to a green and circular economy.

A green and circular economy symbolizes a paradigm shift, embracing a holistic and integrated approach to environmentally friendly economic growth. It is based on the ideas of resource efficiency, waste minimization, and natural capital protection. This transformation has enormous promise not only for minimizing the negative effects of climate change but also for improving social equity, job development, and overall well-being in developing countries.

While the value of a green and circular economy is widely acknowledged, developing countries confront unique hurdles in navigating this transformational process. Among the obstacles that must be overcome are financial constraints, technological limitations, institutional capability shortages, and the need for specific policies. Furthermore, each country has distinct socioeconomic settings and resource endowments, necessitating tailored approaches to transition attempts.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Circular Economy

The circular economy is a model of production and consumption, which involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing, and recycling existing materials and products as long as possible. In this way, the life cycle of products is extended.¹

Green Economy

A green economy is one that seeks to reduce environmental dangers and ecological scarcity while also pursuing sustainable development without hurting the environment. It is related to ecological economics but has a greater political application.

Resource Efficiency

When we talk about resource efficiency it means using the Earth's limited resources in a sustainable manner, whilst minimizing impacts on the environment. The resources we rely on are finite, meaning they will eventually run out, and can only be replenished at a certain rate. If we exceed this rate the resource becomes depleted. Resource efficiency is a way to deliver more with less.

Sustainable Development Green Economy

Sustainable development is defined as development that meets the requirements of the present without jeopardizing future generations' ability to satisfy their own needs.

Sustainability

In the broadest sense, sustainability refers to the ability to maintain or support a process continuously over time. In business and policy contexts, sustainability seeks to prevent the depletion of natural or physical resources, so that they will remain available for the long term.²

It involves creating a system of permanence; a structure where people, planet and profit can live in harmony without compromising one or the other. Over time, this word has gained popularity with mainstream media and become a buzzword for many industries. Sustainability is often broken into three core concepts: economic, environmental, and social.

¹ Circular economy: definition, importance, and benefits (European Parliament)

² What is Sustainability? How Sustainabilities Work, Benefits, and Example (Investopedia)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Historical Developments

Early Environmental Moments Green Economy Concept

The origins of the green economy may be traced back to the early environmental movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Concerns about pollution, resource depletion, and unsustainable activities sparked the emergence of environmental awareness and the need for sustainable development.

Green Economy Concept

As a response to climate change and the need for low-carbon, resource-efficient economies, the concept of a green economy gained ground in the late 2000s. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was instrumental in popularizing the concept of a green economy, emphasizing the potential for job creation and economic growth through environmental conservation.

International Policy Focus

Green and circular economies have received more attention from international policymakers in recent years. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations expressly highlight the need of sustainable economic practices and resource efficiency. Many governments and organizations have created policies and programs to help accelerate the transition to green and circular economies.

Business and Innovation

The commercial sector has also embraced the notions of green and circular economies. Many businesses are implementing sustainable practices, renewable energy sources, and environmentally friendly products. Renewable energy, waste management, and sustainable agriculture have all been pushing the transformation to greener and more circular economic models.

Integration in National Strategies

Several countries have incorporated elements of green and circular economies into their national strategies. The European Green Deal, China's Circular Economy Promotion Law, and Japan's "3R" (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) initiatives are also examples. These initiatives seek to stimulate economic growth while reducing environmental damage.

SUSTAINABILITY

As nations cope with the issues faced by environmental degradation, resource depletion, and climate change, the concept of moving to green and circular economies has attracted substantial attention in recent years. This section provides an overview of the background and history of this crucial subject.

Emergence of Environmental Concerns

The twentieth century's rapid industrialization and economic growth resulted in unprecedented levels of pollution, habitat devastation, and resource extraction. The negative environmental impact of these activities became increasingly apparent, raising worries about the long-term sustainability of economic development.

Rise of Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainable development developed in reaction to the realization that economic advancement must be balanced with environmental protection and social well-being.

The Brundtland Report, a landmark 1987 report by the World Commission³⁴ on Environment and Development, defined sustainable development as one that meets the requirements of the present without jeopardizing future generations' ability to meet their own needs.

Evolution of Green Economy

In the early 2000s, the concept of a green economy gained hold, with a focus on incorporating environmental factors into economic processes. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was instrumental in popularizing the green economy concept by emphasizing the potential for long-term economic growth, job creation, and poverty reduction through investments in renewable energy, clean technologies, and resource efficiency.

³ Brundtland Report: publication by World Commission on Environment and Development

⁴

Circular Economy Principles

The circular economy concept emerged in reaction to a rising awareness of the constraints of the linear "take-make-dispose" production and consumption model. The circular economy promotes measures such as recycling, reusing, and repairing products and materials that isolate economic growth from resource consumption and waste generation. It emphasizes the significance of building long-lasting products, optimizing resource utilization, and closing the loop by converting trash into valuable resources.

Global Agreements and Frameworks

The global community has recognized the critical importance of shifting to more sustainable economic structures. The Sustainable Development Goals ⁵(SDGs) adopted by the United Nations in 2015 give a comprehensive framework for achieving sustainable development, including targets for sustainable consumption and production, clean energy, and climate action. The Paris Agreement⁶, signed in 2015, establishes worldwide targets for lowering greenhouse gas emissions and increasing climate resilience.

National and Regional Initiatives

Globally, countries and regions are taking initiatives to advance green and circular economy objectives. Many governments have implemented rules and legislation to support renewable energy, sustainable behaviors, and circular business models. Regional cooperation, such as the European Union's Circular Economy Action Plan⁷ and China's circular economy initiatives⁸, have shown the potential for large-scale transformational change.

Business and Civil Society Engagement

The commercial sector and civil society organizations have been critical in accelerating the transition to green and circular economies. Businesses are

⁵ The 17 Goals: Sustainable development by the United Nations

⁶ The Paris Agreement: What is the Paris Agreement by the United Nations

⁷ Circular Economy action plan: European Commission

⁸ China's Circular Economy Transition: Challenges and Solutions Ahead: Circular Innovation Lab

progressively incorporating sustainability into their plans, implementing green practices, and adopting circular business models. Meanwhile, civil society organizations work to reform policies, raise awareness, and promote sustainable consumption and production habits.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Chile

Chile is recognized as a significant player in the field of green and circular economies. The country has made notable strides in renewable energy production, with abundant solar, wind, and hydroelectric resources⁹. Successful renewable energy auctions have attracted investments and diversified the energy mix. Chile has also shown commitment to sustainable mining practices and has implemented circular economy initiatives to promote waste reduction and resource recovery. The country's international engagements, such as hosting the COP25, highlight its leadership in advocating for ambitious climate action. Chile's progress positions it as a regional leader in transitioning towards a greener and more circular economy.

China

To address environmental concerns and promote sustainable development, China has acknowledged the significance of moving to a green and circular economy. The country has put in place a number of regulations and initiatives, including the Circular Economy Promotion Law¹⁰, which highlights the necessity of resource conservation, recycling, and waste reduction. China's National Development and Reform Commission¹¹ has established goals for the development of the circular economy, such as improving resource recycling rates and supporting eco-design and eco-industrial parks.

Denmark

Denmark is regarded as a pioneer in the development of green and circular economies. The country has put in place comprehensive policies and efforts to promote

⁹ How Chile Is Becoming a leader in Renewable energy: World Economic Forum

¹⁰ The Circular Economy Model: PWC

¹¹ NDRC: Peoples Republic of China

renewable energy, resource efficiency, waste management, and long-term urban growth. Denmark's achievement in these areas has won it a global role model reputation.

United States

At both the federal and state levels, the United States has been actively involved in promoting green and circular economy principles. While policies and programs differ by state, certain states, including California and New York, have set aggressive sustainability goals and restrictions. To promote waste reduction, recycling, and sustainable procurement practices, the federal government has also developed projects such as the Federal Green Challenge and the Sustainable Materials Management Program¹².

The Ellen MacArthur Foundation United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

The Ellen MacArthur Foundation is a global pioneer in hastening the shift to a circular economy. To establish circular economy ideas and frameworks, the foundation works with enterprises, governments, and academic institutions. They undertake research, promote information sharing, and offer advice on circular design, circular cities, and circular economy practices across a variety of industries. Their work promotes innovation and systemic change in the direction of circularity.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

UNEP is vital in promoting environmental sustainability and assisting with the transition to green and circular economies. It assists developing countries through technical aid, policy advice, and capacity building.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

2010	The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) develops the "Green Economy Initiative" to encourage green growth and sustainable development.
2012	For sustainable development, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable

¹² Federal Green Challenge (FGC): United States Environmental Protection Agency

	Development (Rio+20) emphasizes the significance of moving to a green economy.
2015	Adoption of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including Goal 12 on Responsible Consumption and Production.
2015	The Paris Agreement is adopted at COP21, emphasizing the importance of low-carbon and climate-resilient economies.
2020	The COVID-19 pandemic shows the vulnerabilities in global supply chains and the significance of resilient and circular economies.
2021	Continued global efforts to integrate circular economy principles into national policies and development strategies.
2023	Increased collaboration between international organizations, governments, and the private sector to accelerate the transition to a green and circular economy.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Circular Economy Package (European Union)

The European Union's Circular Economy Package ¹³ is a legislative endeavor to foster a more sustainable and circular economy. It establishes aggressive targets and strategies to increase resource efficiency, reduce waste output, and increase recycling rates. Regulations on waste management, packaging waste, landfill diversion, and extended producer responsibility are included in the package. It also promotes the growth of eco-design and circular business concepts.

¹³ Circular Economy Action Plan: European Commission

Circular Economy Action Plan (China)

The Circular Economy Action Plan of China, which was launched in 2006, intends to solve resource scarcity, pollution, and environmental deterioration. The strategy highlights the significance of circularity in attaining long-term growth. It involves recycling, waste reduction, and eco-design policies. China promotes the development of circular industries, such as the recycling and remanufacturing sectors, as well as the creation of eco-industrial parks that foster symbiotic ties between businesses to maximize resource usage.

Waste Management Initiatives¹⁴ (Singapore)

To address its limited land availability and resource constraints, Singapore has undertaken comprehensive waste management programs. The country takes a comprehensive strategy to trash reduction, recycling, and energy recovery. It has invested in innovative waste-to-energy systems that incinerate garbage while producing power. Singapore also encourages recycling through public education, incentives, and the establishment of recycling infrastructure. The focus on waste management helps to create a more sustainable and circular economy.

Circular Economy Initiatives (The Netherlands)

The Netherlands has taken immense steps to promote the ideas and practices of the circular economy. The country has put regulations and measures in place to promote resource efficiency, waste reduction, and circular business models. It promotes, for example, circular procurement practices, in which public agencies prioritize the acquisition of items with high recycled content and longer lifecycles. To recover valuable resources from garbage, the Netherlands has also created unique recycling facilities, such as chemical recycling factories. Collaboration among government, business, and research organizations has been critical in propelling the circular economy agenda.

Circular Economy Roadmap (Finland)

The Circular Economy Roadmap of Finland describes the country's strategic approach to developing a circular economy. The roadmap focuses on important industries such as building, manufacturing, and food, and it establishes explicit circularity targets and timetables. Finland encourages sustainable forestry methods to secure a sustainable supply of wood-based goods. It also promotes eco-design and encourages companies to use circular

14

business models. The roadmap acts as a framework for policy creation, investments, and collaborations to help Finland move to a more circular future.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Promoting Renewable Energy

Promoting renewable energy sources is a critical step toward achieving a green and circular economy. Countries may drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions and battle climate change by transitioning away from fossil fuels and toward renewable sources such as solar, wind, and hydropower. This strategy entails setting renewable energy targets, offering financial incentives for renewable energy projects, strengthening grid infrastructure, and investing in clean energy research and development. Governments, industries, and international organizations may work together to expedite renewable energy adoption and achieve a sustainable energy future.

Enhancing Resource Efficiency

Improving resource efficiency is critical for lowering resource use and waste generation. Businesses can implement lean manufacturing practices, which focus on optimizing production processes and minimizing waste. Improving energy efficiency, water management, and material efficiency across the full value chain is part of this. Investing in resource-efficient technology and practices, such as recycling and reusing materials, can result in cost savings, less environmental impact, and increased competitiveness.

Implementing Circular Design Concepts

Circular design concepts entail creating goods that are long-lasting, repairable, and recyclable. This solution encourages firms to use designs that reduce waste and extend product lifecycle. Using sustainable and recyclable materials, designing for disassembly, and developing reverse logistics systems to assist product take-back and recycling are all examples of this. Businesses can reduce resource consumption, waste generation, and produce products that have a beneficial impact throughout their lifecycle by using circular design principles.

Encouraging Sustainable Consumption

Sustainable consumption patterns must be promoted to achieve a green and circular economy. Governments can develop legislation and initiatives that enhance consumer knowledge about the environmental impact of their purchasing decisions and encourage responsible consumption. This includes fostering the sharing economy, assisting in the development of sustainable food systems, and offering incentives for environmentally friendly products and services. Consumers can be empowered by education and awareness campaigns to make educated decisions and embrace sustainable lifestyles, resulting in lower resource consumption and waste generation.

Supporting Green Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Supporting green innovation and entrepreneurship encourages the development and acceptance of environmentally friendly technologies and business models. Governments may provide funds, subsidies, and tax breaks for green companies and sustainable solution research and development. Green entrepreneurship incubators and accelerators can provide coaching, networking opportunities, and financial support to foster innovation. This approach promotes the development of environmentally friendly products, services, and business models that contribute to a green and circular economy while also spurring economic growth and job creation.

Strengthening International Cooperation

To address the problems of transitioning to a green and circular economy, international cooperation and collaboration are required. Countries, international organizations, and corporations can collaborate to share best practices, exchange knowledge, and invest in long-term projects. This includes measures to transfer technology to developing nations to assist them in adopting sustainable practices, financial support systems for green projects, and capacity-building programs. Increasing international collaboration allows countries to learn from one another, share resources, experiences, and work together to create a more sustainable and circular future.

FURTHER READING

1. . World Resources Institute (WRI):

- WRI is a global research organization that focuses on environmental sustainability. They provide research, analysis, and resources related to

various aspects of the green and circular economy, including sustainable consumption and production, resource efficiency, and circular business models.

- Website: <https://www.wri.org/>

2. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP):

- UNEP is the leading global environmental authority that provides research, reports, and publications on a wide range of environmental topics. Their resources cover aspects of the green and circular economy, sustainable development, and policy frameworks for transitioning to more sustainable economic models.

- Website: <https://www.unep.org/>

3. Ellen MacArthur Foundation:

- The Ellen MacArthur Foundation is a thought leader in the circular economy field. Their website provides access to publications, case studies, and reports that offer insights into circular economy practices, circular design principles, and circular economy initiatives in different sectors.

- Website: <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/>

4. International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD):

- IISD is an independent think tank that focuses on sustainable development. They conduct research and provide analysis on a wide range of topics, including the circular economy, sustainable consumption and production, and policy recommendations for achieving a greener and more inclusive economy.

- Website: <https://www.iisd.org/>

5. International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA):

- IRENA is an intergovernmental organization that promotes the adoption and sustainable use of renewable energy worldwide. Their

website offers access to reports, publications, and data related to renewable energy technologies, policies, and the role of renewable energy in transitioning to a green and circular economy.

- Website: <https://www.irena.org/>

6. Green Economy Coalition:

- The Green Economy Coalition is a global network of organizations working towards a green and fair economy. Their website provides resources, case studies, and publications that explore various aspects of the green and circular economy, sustainable finance, and policy advocacy for sustainable development.
- Website: <https://www.greeneconomycoalition.org/>

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