



**Ministerial Luncheon: Innovative Policies and Solutions for a Circular Economy
15 March, 13:00-14:30**

**Remarks by
H.E. Ambassador Inga Rhonda King
President of the Economic and Social Council**

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am honored to be here with you today.

We at the Economic and Social Council have also been paying attention to the importance of the circular economy. Last October, in a joint meeting held with the Second Committee of the General Assembly, we discussed this very same issue, the shift away from a linear economy of ‘take-make-consume-and throw away’ towards a circular economy.

At the heart of the circular economy, the idea of waste is redefined and new business models and product designs enable us to give another life to what we once believed was “waste”.

It is encouraging to see that a growing population is committed to making this shift in their pattern of production and consumption, which is precisely the kind of structural change necessary to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda and move towards a more sustainable and just world.

And this global movement could not have come at a better time. The world will add an additional one billion inhabitants by the year 2030, and with it will come a drastic increase in the demand for natural resources and raw materials.

The combination of population growth, rapid urbanization and economic development will increase global waste generation by 70% over the next 30 years.

Currently, the world is generating more than 2 billion tons of municipal solid waste each year. If the current path were to be continued, this would increase to 3.4 billion tons over the next 30 years.

In addition, data on material consumption show that humanity is currently using nature 1.7 times faster than the planet's ecosystems can regenerate.

These trends are clearly not sustainable.

The circular economy can contribute to the achievement of not only SDG 12, on responsible consumption and production, but also SDG 6, on clean water and sanitation; SDG 7, on affordable and clean energy; SDG 8, on decent work and economic growth; SDG 11, on sustainable cities and communities; SDG 13, on climate action; SDG 14, on life below water, and SDG 15, on life on land.

It also promises vast economic opportunities, such as creating additional revenue from existing products and processes, spurring innovation, and reducing operating costs, to name a few.

Ladies and gentlemen,

While it is clear that a linear economy model and finite resources are not delivering a sustainable future, this message is still not well understood or even fully accepted. It is therefore important to clearly and effectively communicate the concept of a circular economy to the public and policy makers as well as its benefits related to the environment, health, economics and security.

As there is a lack of understanding among the public and policy makers on what constitutes a circular economy, a first step would be to agree on the parameters of the term in order to ensure concerted actions and deliverables.

In order to diffuse any misunderstandings or myths about these matters, it is important that communication be fact-based, transparent and consistent.

The transition to a circular model will require coordinated action from consumers, governments and businesses. For business, it is necessary to adopt the idea that the circular economy has the potential to generate significant economic benefits.

For governments, this transition needs to be framed from a policy and strategy perspective. Political leadership will be key in this regard.

For consumers, it is necessary to change minds and behaviour about how goods and products are sourced, created, used and disposed of.

Excellencies,

As this global movement gains momentum, we have important opportunities ahead to highlight tangible solutions in support of the transition away from unsustainable economic models.

In September 2019, heads of state will come together once again to discuss innovative solutions and reaffirm their commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda when the High-Level political forum on sustainable development meets at summit level, under the auspices of the General Assembly. Let us ensure that the circular economy is an integral part of these discussions and that we continue sharing experiences and best practices to accelerate the change we so urgently need.

Thank you.