

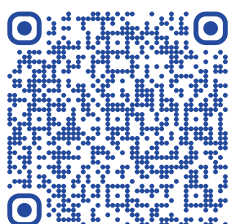


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7th SWITCH-Asia Annual Meeting



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27-29 October 2025 • Bangkok, Thailand
EVENT SUMMARY REPORT

Acknowledgements

This Report was prepared on behalf of the EU SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component (PSC) by Dr Lunchakorn PRATHUMRATANA and Natrika SIRINAPASPOKIN under the supervision of Dr Zinaida FADEEVA, Team Leader, SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component.

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CONTENTS



Introduction	4
Agenda and Event Objectives.....	4
PART I. SWITCH-Asia Annual Conference	6
Session 1 Opening – SWITCH-Asia Contribution to the Global Gateway	6
Session 2: Circular Economy – uniting perspectives for impactful actions	13
Session 3: Circular Economy – uniting perspectives for impactful actions (continued)	15
Session 4: Policies Advancing Circular Economy	18
Session 5: Climate and Materials Nexus - From Diagnosis to Action	20
Session 6: Celebrating Leadership - Circular Economy and SCP Inspirational Practices	23
Session 7: Circular Economy Policy and Practices Linkages.....	25
Session 8: Sector deep dives - Facilitating uptake of Circular Economy Practices Across Key Sectors with focus on construction, agri-food, plastics, textile and leather	28
Session 9: Partnerships and Engagements	32
Session 10: Reflections and Closing	35
PART IV. SWITCH-Asia Grant Project Meeting	38

INTRODUCTION



Rapid economic growth in Asia has lifted many countries out of poverty, but it has led to increased use of natural resources, growing greenhouse gas emissions, and more waste. Achieving sustainability now requires fundamental changes in business practices and consumption patterns. Circular Economy (CE) and Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) aim to improve environmental performance, stimulate demand for better products, and guide consumers towards informed choices. The European Union is committed to addressing these challenges, and the SWITCH-Asia programme, launched in 2007, has made significant progress in promoting SCP across 42 countries in the region.

The SWITCH-Asia Programme consists of two components:

The Policy Support Component (PSC): managed by the Directorate General International Partnerships (DG INTPA) of the European Commission. PSC's activities are implemented by GOPA Worldwide Consultants and NIRAS.

The Grant Component: directly managed by the Directorate General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) of the European Commission.

Since the launch of the programme, more than 158 projects have been funded with an average grant size of EUR 1.7 million across a wide range of sectors including energy efficiency in industrial plants and houses, agri-food and fishing sectors, textiles and leather, tourism, logistics and freight. These have been implemented by over 500 Asian and European partners and some 100 private sector associates, which indirectly benefitted up to 80,000 MSMEs.

On 27–29 October 2025, the SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component organised the 7th SWITCH-Asia Annual Meeting, held at the Hyatt Regency Bangkok Sukhumvit Hotel in Bangkok, Thailand. The event served as a platform to connect, take stock of progress, and jointly explore emerging opportunities with the Programme's key stakeholders. Participants included representatives of the European Commission and EU Delegations, national government counterparts, parliamentarians, development partners, private-sector actors, financial institutions, civil society organisations, academia, SWITCH-Asia experts, as well as representatives of the SWITCH-Asia Grant Projects.

Agenda and Event Objectives

The Annual Event was planned to combine and align several objectives. It was divided into four distinct parts, which were targeted to meet defined objectives of specific stakeholder groups. In addition, there were three back-to-back events organised during the events including ACEBA: Mobilising Ambitious CE Business Action on 28 October 2025, GPP Expert Meeting, and Thailand ACEBA Launch on 29 October 2025 (the reports of the side events are not included in this document)

PART I. Annual Conference

Hosted by: EU SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component

Participants: DG INTPA, EU Delegations, National Focal Points, Experts, Development Partners, Government Partners of Technical Advisory projects, and Private Companies

Date and time: 27 October 2025

Objectives:

- Showcase the achievements of SWITCH-Asia and highlight scalable business models, local practices, and innovations across supply chains, ultimately paving the way for Global Gateway investments.

- Critically assess circular economy policies and practices across key sectors and value chains and reflect on progress and bottlenecks, and opportunities in the enabling environment.
- Strengthen regional dialogue and public-private partnerships by linking international strategies with local practices, inspire peer learning, and promoting inclusive investment opportunities that scale up circular solutions.

PART II. Internal Meeting of DG INTPA & EUD Delegations (closed-door meeting)

Hosted by: EU SWITCH-Asia Programme Management

Participants: DG INTPA, EU Delegations

Date and time: 28 October 2025 (Afternoon)

Objectives:

- Coordination of the SWITCH-Asia Programme, synergies with Multiannual Indicative Programmes, and the Global Gateway.

PART III. SWITCH-Asia Steering Committee Meeting

Hosted by: SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component

Participants: DG INTPA, EU Delegations, National focal points, invited observers

Date and time: 29 October 2025 (morning)

Objectives:

- To present the overall framework of SWITCH-Asia operations and its current stage of implementation, including through ongoing technical advisories (TAs).
- Discuss synergies and added value, relevance of the Programme to policy dialogues in the region (both nationally and across borders) and the priorities under the European Green Deal and Global Gateway.

PART IV. Meeting of SWITCH-Asia Grant Projects

Hosted by: EU SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component

Participants: SWITCH-Asia Grant Projects, representatives of the technical advisory projects, National Focal Points, Experts, Development Partners, Government Partners of Technical Advisory projects, and Private Companies

Date and time: 29 October 2025 (morning, in parallel to PART III)

Objectives:

- To discuss strategies that will make the impact of the SWITCH-Asia Grant Projects more profound and lasting.
- To explore potential avenues of connecting knowledge of grants and policy-making processes, including through linkages with PSC technical advisories.

PART I. SWITCH-ASIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE



Session 1 Opening – SWITCH-Asia Contribution to the Global Gateway



Mr. Tom CORRIE, Head of Cooperation, EU Delegation to Thailand, opened the 7th SWITCH-Asia Annual Meeting by expressing condolences for the passing of Thailand's Queen Mother and welcoming participants from government, private sector, and civil society. He emphasised the urgency of shifting to circular and low-carbon economies amid global uncertainties. Highlighting the EU's European Green Deal and Global Gateway, he underscored cooperation to promote sustainable investments and responsible business. Mr. Corrie reaffirmed SWITCH-Asia's pivotal role through over 150 projects and 80,000 MSMEs in mainstreaming sustainable consumption and production and encouraged deeper collaboration to scale up circular economy solutions across Asia.



Mr. Olivier LOUIS, Head of Sector Investment and Budget Support for Asia-Pacific (DG INTPA), European Commission, delivered brief opening remarks, expressing appreciation for the SWITCH-Asia team for organising the 7th Annual Meeting. He introduced himself and his team in Brussels, as well as Mr. Vincent VIAUD, the SWITCH-Asia Programme Coordinator based in Bangkok. Mr. Louis emphasised his anticipation for engaging discussions and fruitful exchanges throughout the three-day event, expressing hope that the meeting would meaningfully advance the circular economy agenda and support the EU's Global Gateway vision for scaling up sustainable investments in Asia.



Ms. Zinaida FADEEVA, Team Leader, SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component, welcomed participants on behalf of the SWITCH-Asia team, recognizing both the grant projects and the policy support component as key pillars of the programme. She emphasised SWITCH-Asia's central role in driving the circular economy transition across Asia and the Pacific by "connecting the dots" between businesses and governments, theory and policy, and country-level achievements and regional dialogue. She acknowledged the vital contributions of national focal points, EU delegations, experts, and grantees in advancing practical circular solutions.

Ms. Fadeeva's presentation on the **"Introduction to the SWITCH-Asia programme and its key achievements"** highlighted the EU SWITCH-Asia Programme's contribution to advancing the circular economy across Asia and the Pacific. It emphasised SWITCH-Asia's dual approach - through grant projects and the Policy Support Component - to support low-carbon, resource-efficient, and circular economic transitions. With 158 projects implemented across 42 countries since the Programme's inception in 2007, SWITCH-Asia fosters sustainable production and consumption practices, especially in key sectors such as food systems, textiles, plastics, tourism, and construction. The presentation also showcased ongoing technical advisories on green public procurement, SCP integration in NDCs, and extended producer responsibility, alongside regional initiatives like ACEBA and STEP II that strengthen business engagement, policy dialogue, and cross-regional knowledge exchange.



On knowledge sharing, stakeholder engagement, and communications, **Dr. Sara Gabai**, Communication and Knowledge Expert for the EU SWITCH-Asia Programme, presented key milestones achieved during implementation and highlighted the role of engaging with stakeholders and storytellers. This collaboration helps advance understanding, raise awareness, and promote SCP and circular economy practices across

sectors, regions, and countries. With an online community of over **900,000 followers** interested in the programme's themes and **more than 100 million content views** across its digital channels, SWITCH-Asia has become an important platform to amplify Asian and European voices, share impactful stories and innovations, and strengthen regional partnerships.

Panel discussion 1: Scaling Up SWITCH-Asia Initiatives through Global Gateway Circular Investments in Asia

Panellists:

- Olivier LOUIS, Head of Sector, Asia-Pacific Investment & Budget Support, DG INTPA
- Michael RATTINGER, Senior Climate Change Specialist, ADB Thailand Resident Mission
- Jean-Pierre MARCELLI, Director, South-East Asia Office, AFD
- Quentin MOREAU, Regional Director, GERES

The Panel clarified the goal of the EU's Global Gateway as a strategic framework for mobilising sustainable, de-risked investments in partner regions, and illustrated how its financing tools and enabling-environment support can align with SWITCH-Asia's policy and technical foundations. The session aimed to demonstrate how this combined approach can help move circular and green transition initiatives from successful pilots to investment-grade scale through stronger policy reform, robust partnerships, blended finance, and measurable circular outcomes.



The panel opened by clarifying the **EU's Global Gateway** as a strategic Team Europe approach designed to close infrastructure financing gaps in partner regions while advancing the green and digital transitions. **Olivier LOUIS** (European Commission) explained that Global Gateway prioritises five sectors: sustainable energy and climate action, transport, digitalisation, education and research, and health. Its distinctive feature is the use of EU grants to de-risk and crowd-in private and public capital via guarantees and blended finance, thereby making projects that are initially “not bankable” investment-ready. Crucially, Global Gateway also invests in improving the enabling environment—sector policies, governance, human rights, and public financial management- so that investments can scale responsibly and aligned with the highest environmental, social and governance (ESG) standards. Mr. Louis underscored the complementarity with SWITCH-Asia, which already strengthens the policy foundations, technical capacity, access to finance, and skills essential for successful Global Gateway implementation. He also highlighted a new €25 million call for proposals aimed at scaling proven SWITCH-Asia actions with a stronger focus on financial sustainability and partnerships with financiers.



Offering the perspective of a multilateral bank, **Michael RATTINGER** (ADB) highlighted Asia's ~\$100 billion annual infrastructure gap and the necessity to mobilise private investment alongside public finance. ADB blends instruments (loans, equity, guarantees, TA) and co-finances with partners to catalyse larger flows into green, circular value chains—especially where EU policies (e.g., CBAM, EPR, digital product passports) are reshaping market requirements. He emphasised support to MSMEs within supply chains through corporates and local banks and cited examples where limited concessional finance unlocked significant co-investment: PET bottle recycling across several ASEAN markets (keeping ~5 billion bottles/year out of oceans) and sustainable shrimp in Thailand. Mr. Rattinger urged adoption of circular metrics (GHG cuts, reduced effluent, quality green jobs, gender inclusion) and wider use of performance-based finance tied to such KPIs.



From a bilateral finance institution lens, **Jean-Pierre MARCELLI** (AFD) endorsed Global Gateway's vision of safe, sustainable connectivity that creates shared value and decent jobs. AFD's Southeast Asia strategy prioritises climate mitigation and adaptation, with concrete work on the ASEAN Power Grid, low-carbon transport, and port digitalisation—always coupled with policy dialogue, risk analysis, and social safeguards. He stressed that transitions create winners and those at risk, so programmes must anticipate distributional impacts, invest in skills and just transition measures, and sustain structured dialogue with investors to reconcile profitability with people and planet.



Providing the NGO view, **Quentin MOREAU** (GERES) drew lessons from five SWITCH-Asia grant projects: (1) start with practical technical solutions; (2) take localised, bottom-up approaches; (3) pilot to proof-of-concept; and (4) secure a viable economic model for scale. He illustrated with Mongolia's housing insulation (tackling air pollution by aligning households, MSMEs, banks, and authorities, now moving to public-finance-enabled scaling) and Cambodia's improved cookstoves (a mature market of ~3 million units sustained through value-chain development and carbon finance). His takeaways: pursue whole-value-chain engagement, design win-win business models, draw on diverse finance (public, climate, carbon, private), and allow time for systems to mature.



In the Q&A, panellists addressed: importance of aligning demand and supply of finance (use concessional tools to lower cost of capital and make more projects bankable); protecting vulnerable groups during transitions (just transition, vocational upskilling, social measures); accelerating national/regional, e.g., ASEAN, ownership (mindset shifts, government buy-in, stable policy frameworks); and updating financial metrics to reflect circular outcomes. The session closed with consensus that SWITCH-Asia and Global Gateway offer a coherent pathway to move from pilots to investment-grade scale, anchored in policy reform, robust partnerships, and measurable circular impacts.

Panel discussion 2: Leveraging SWITCH-Asia Regional Policy Flagships to advance the EU Green Deal and Global Gateway

Panellists:

- Mr. Thomas THOMAS, Co-convenor ACEBA, Chairman ARAIBA Sdn Bhd and Senior Expert, EU SWITCH-Asia PSC
- Mr. Chris COCKER, CEO, Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO)
- Ms. Valeriya ORLOVA, Education for Sustainable Development Manager, The Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC)
- Ms. Chandima Suwandani Nisansala MOHOTTIGE, Environment Policy & Planning, Ministry of Environment, Government of Sri Lanka

This session, facilitated by Zinaida Fadeeva, clarified how the SWITCH-Asia Regional Policy Flagships—including the Central Asia Parliamentary Platform for Circular Economy, the ASEAN Circular Economy Business Alliance (ACEBA), the work of South Asian countries, under Technical Advisory, supporting strengthening NDCs through SCP policies and actions, and the Sustainable Tourism Enhancement Programme (STEP) in the Pacific—can be leveraged to advance the EU Green Deal and Global Gateway.

It positioned the circular economy as both a unifying vision and a practical tool for addressing the triple planetary crisis, while illustrating how these regional initiatives are building the policy coherence, institutional capacity, and multi-stakeholder partnerships needed to drive circular transitions. The discussion showed how structured collaboration under SWITCH-Asia can accelerate the development of investment-ready circular projects, strengthen alignment with EU priorities, and scale practical solutions across Asia and the Pacific.



From Southeast Asia, **Mr. Thomas THOMAS (ACEBA/ARIBA)** emphasised business leadership as a catalyst for scaling circular solutions. ACEBA has developed a regional framework and curated 80+ case studies to demonstrate viable models, with Phase II expanding participation and advocacy across Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Lao PDR, and Malaysia. He underlined three conditions for scale: (1) **accessible finance** for MSMEs (simpler, user-friendly instruments aligned with Global Gateway), (2) **public-good investment** in innovation that may not yield immediate returns, and (3) **mindset shifts** in firms and governments toward profitability with responsibility. Crucially, ASEAN's action frameworks exist; implementation and regional alignment are now decisive.



Representing Central Asia, **Ms. Valeriya ORLOVA (CAREC)** highlighted the importance of **structured dialogue among governments, parliaments, and businesses** to harmonise strategies and remove cross-border barriers. The platform enables peer learning and coherence, especially of the Members of Parliament positions, across Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Awareness-raising is essential, particularly for SMEs outside capitals; incentives (e.g., tax relief, lower borrowing costs) and practical guidance accelerate adoption of SCP/CE practices inspired by the EU Green Deal.



Speaking for South Asia, **Ms. Chandima Suwandani Nisansala MOHOTTIGE** described a **whole-of-government, whole-of-economy approach**: Sri Lanka's national SCP policy (born from SWITCH-Asia Phase I) embeds circular economy across sectors; SCP has been integrated into the country's NDCs as part of a regional initiative; Green Public Procurement is advancing with circular criteria in product prioritisation; and recent regulatory reforms include a strengthened National Environment Act with EPR, a national plastic action plan, and bans on select single-use plastics. She called for harmonised definitions and standards (e.g., evolving ISO families), stronger conformity assessment ecosystems, and multi-stakeholder policy dialogues (e.g., Sri Lanka's SCP Forum and inter-agency GPP committee) alongside green taxonomies for the financial sector to channel capital into circular projects.



From the Pacific, **Chris COCKER (SPTO)** stressed that regional cooperation is vital for small, remote, SME-driven economies facing acute climate vulnerabilities. Guided by the 2050 Blue Pacific Strategy, SPTO is aligning policy and implementation through the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework, regional standards and indicators, and the STEP programme. New inclusive governance platforms (ministers, private sector, observers), leadership summits, youth and women forums, and cross-sector partnerships (tourism with aviation, agriculture, fisheries, environment, and energy) are building momentum. The key bottleneck is translation from policy to enterprise-level benefits: climate and development finance must be easier to access, suited to SME capacities, and paired with awareness and capability building to adopt circular practices.

Cross-cutting takeaways:

- **Policy–practice–investment bridges** are working where business coalitions, parliaments, and ministries co-design solutions;
- **Harmonisation** (standards, definitions, taxonomies) and **regional platforms** reduce friction in cross-border material and product flows;
- **Finance at scale** requires blended models that are simple for MSMEs, complemented by public-good and just-transition measures;
- **Capacity and awareness**, especially outside capitals remain prerequisites; and
- **Governance evolution** is underway, sharing circular economy responsibilities across environment, industry, finance, tourism, and other portfolios.

Session 2: Circular Economy – uniting perspectives for impactful actions

Speaker:

- Dr. René VAN BERKEL, Co-convenor ACEBA; Senior Expert, SWITCH-Asia; Member, International Resource Panel; Faculty, Thammasat University

Panellists:

- Ms. Latifahaida ABDUL LATIF, Assistant Director, Analysis & Monitoring on Finance and Socioeconomic Issues, ASEAN Secretariat
- Mr. Kanat SULTANALIEV, Executive Director, Tian Shan Policy Center, American University of Central Asia

Moderator: Ms. Loraine GATLABAYAN, Key Expert, SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component

Sessions 2 and 3 together presented a coherent flow of activities that gradually aligned participants' understanding of circular economy action across supply chains - from introducing the overarching CE framework – reflected from the regional perspectives - to examining concrete business practices in key sectors, and finally to discussing the impactful actions needed to scale circular solutions in practice.

Session 2 clarified how the circular economy can serve as both a unifying strategic vision and a practical mechanism for addressing the triple planetary crisis. It brought together perspectives from ASEAN and Central Asia to illustrate how regional frameworks, parliamentary engagement, and cross-sector collaboration - supported by SWITCH-Asia - are laying the foundations for coordinated circular transitions. The discussion highlighted the need for coherent policy alignment, stronger institutional capacity, and the development of investment-ready circular projects through structured regional partnerships.



The session opened with **Dr. René VAN BERKEL** presenting a strategic framing of the circular economy as both a unifying vision and a practical tool to address the triple planetary crisis. He underlined that while the circular economy is increasingly mainstreamed, differing interpretations risk diluting its ambition. At its core, the circular economy seeks to decouple economic growth and human well-being from resource depletion, through systemic change across value chains. Dr. VAN BERKEL also introduced the Circularity Canvas that is a practical instrument designed to consolidate knowledge, encourage experimentation, and accelerate real-world circular solutions across sectors and business models.



In the panel discussion, **Ms. Latifahaida ABDUL LATIF** highlighted ASEAN's multi-pillar approach to circular economy transition, rooted in the ASEAN Circular Economy Framework and supported by country-level initiatives such as Malaysia's manufacturing policy. She emphasised that implementation requires overcoming policy silos, strengthening regulator and financier capacities, and creating incentives that support MSMEs. Five strategic priorities guide ASEAN's action: standards harmonisation, trade facilitation, technology-enabled traceability, MSME financing, and energy efficiency. An Independent Advisory Panel serves as a platform for structured private-sector engagement and accelerating uptake of circular practices.



From Central Asia, **Mr. Kanat SULTANALIEV** noted that the region is at an early but promising stage in its circular transition. Supported by SWITCH-Asia, dialogues with parliamentarians led to the establishment of an Inter-Parliamentary Platform and an MoU on circular policy alignment. Plans for a regional circular economy framework are emerging, anchored in national green economy strategies and increasing private-sector interest driven by ESG expectations. While financial institutions express willingness to support circular initiatives, specialised expertise and trained professionals remain limited. He underscored the continued need for SWITCH-Asia's support—both through technical advisories and future grant projects, especially in sectors such as tourism and hospitality.

Building on these perspectives, Dr. Van Berkel reflected on regional collaboration priorities identified in Central Asia, including policy alignment, sectoral knowledge exchange (construction, agri-food, tourism, extractives), cross-border market development for circular products, and joint efforts to develop bankable, investment-ready projects. He stressed that successful circular economy financing requires attention to both supply and demand: innovation and entrepreneurship on one side, and long-term market signals and incentives on the other. Scalable impact depends on countries jointly building enabling ecosystems where circular solutions can be demonstrated, replicated, and invested in at regional level.

Session 3: Circular Economy – uniting perspectives for impactful actions (continued)

Session 3 translated conceptual and policy perspectives, presented and discussed in Session 2, into practical, sector-specific applications. Participants examined circular opportunities across agri-food, construction, textiles, and tourism value chains using the Circular Economy Business Canvas, identifying business benefits, social impacts, and environmental gains. Inspirational cases from SWITCH-Asia grants and ACEBA enterprises demonstrated how circular models—such as zero-waste hospitality, textile-to-textile recycling, resource-efficient construction, and ESG-driven agri-food practices—are already delivering tangible results. The session underscored that scaling such practices requires supportive policies, accessible finance for MSMEs, cross-sector learning, and practical tools that help businesses transform circular concepts into investable solutions.

3.1 CE practices in different sectors – critical assessment of practices in agri-food, construction, textiles and tourism

Moderator: **Dr. René VAN BERKEL**, Co-convenor ACEBA; Senior Expert, SWITCH-Asia; International Resource Panel; Faculty, Thammasat University

The session opened with a multisectoral roundtable led by Dr. René Van Berkel, where participants examined circular economy applications in agri-food, construction, textile, and tourism value chains. Using the Circular Economy Business Canvas, stakeholders assessed opportunities to scale circularity - identifying business, environmental, and social benefits such as cost savings, strengthened supply-chain resilience, innovation potential, renewable energy uptake, and local job creation. Participants highlighted the importance of

maintaining material quality in recycled products and offered concrete examples from across the region, including value-added use of coffee and pepper by-products, cement producers replacing raw materials with industrial waste, hotels adopting zero-waste models, and companies integrating electric vehicles and battery-end-of-life solutions. Recommendations included adopting a people-centred approach and incorporating risk assessments such as potential job displacement—into circular business planning.

3.2 Celebrating Leadership – Circular Economy and SCP Inspirational Practices

The subsequent panel discussion, moderated by **Mr. Thomas THOMAS**, showcased practical cases from SWITCH-Asia grants and ACEBA-supported enterprises, demonstrating how circular economy practices translate into measurable business and community benefits.



Ms. Alisara SIVAYATHORN (Sivatel Bangkok Hotel) presented the hotel's achievement of zero food waste to landfill through staff training, zero-waste culinary practices, and the "From Kitchen to Chicken and Beyond" model, converting kitchen waste into chicken feed and fertiliser for rooftop gardens. Benefits include cost savings, enhanced brand value, new revenue from training and study visits, and strong peer inspiration. She underscored that mindset, responsibility, and starting with small practical steps are fundamental to advancing circularity in tourism.



Mr. Jirarot POJANAVARAPHAN (SC GRAND, Thailand) described the company's transformation of post-consumer and post-industrial textile waste—including airline and logistics uniforms—into new garments and accessories. With roots in three generations of textile recycling, SC GRAND is building a regional circular

supply chain, integrating carbon credit mechanisms and partnering with global brands. He stressed that government incentives, business model innovation, and early education are essential to accelerate textile circularity, and that manufacturers can unlock significant value from supply-chain waste streams.



Ms. Usha Maskey MANANDHAR (MinErgy, Nepal) highlighted circular and energy-efficient construction solutions using locally feasible materials such as hollow bricks and agricultural residues, reducing energy consumption by up to 70%. The initiative has catalysed policy reform in 38 municipalities, strengthened MSME markets via digital tools, and mobilised preferential green loans through commercial banks. She emphasised that circular construction is profitable, climate-resilient, and scalable when supported by enabling policies.



Ms. Enkhtsatsral Namkhajantsan (People in Need, Mongolia) presented ESG and circularity initiatives in the agri-food sector, with over 1,800 MSMEs engaged and 23 receiving tailored ESG technical support through ESGpedia. Verified MSMEs gain access to sustainable finance and retail partnerships. She shared a case of a small chili-oil producer whose adoption of simple resource-efficient practices earned national recognition, demonstrating how even micro-enterprises can benefit from ESG adoption. She noted that ESG standards are emerging as key market drivers for competitiveness and growth.

Across both segments, the session highlighted strong regional momentum and the growing recognition that circular economy solutions deliver tangible business value, community benefits, and environmental gains. Participants emphasised that scaling impact requires supportive policies, accessible finance for MSMEs, cross-sector knowledge exchange, and practical tools that help businesses turn circular concepts into investable projects.

Session 4: Policies Advancing Circular Economy

The purpose of the first part of the session was to paint a landscape of policies related to SCP and circular economy, across Asia-Pacific. This would set the context for the second part of the session, which delved into two specific policy instruments, viz, Green Public Procurement (GPP), and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR). The focus on the two policy instruments reflected the policy priorities set by many governments in the region and by ASEAN as a regional economic bloc.

Moderator: Mr. Sachin Joshi, Key Expert, SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component

Speakers:

- Dr Zinaida FADEEVA, Team Leader, SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component
- Dr. Thomas LINDHQVIST, Senior Expert, EPR
- Mr Sanjay KUMAR, Senior Expert, Green Public Procurement
- Mr. Martin SCHNEEKLOTH, Sector Counsellor for Circular Economy, Royal Danish Embassy in Bangkok
- Ms. Latifahaida ABDUL LATIF, ASEAN Secretariat

The session opened with **Dr. Zinaida FADEEVA** presenting an analysis of more than 100 national and regional policies across Asia and the Pacific, identifying 26 with explicit circular economy (CE) commitments. She outlined three waves of CE-related policymaking: early 3R and recycling laws; broader green growth and SCP strategies embedding circularity across multiple sectors; and, most recently, dedicated CE frameworks linked to industrial competitiveness and innovation. Dr. FADEEVA highlighted persistent governance challenges, including dispersed institutional mandates, weak coordination, unclear delegation of responsibilities, fragmented resources, and limited monitoring, reporting, and verification mechanisms. She also noted that SCP principles remain central to CE implementation and demonstrated how countries increasingly consolidate coordination structures, introduce comprehensive policy instruments, and strengthen implementation pathways to accelerate progress.

Deep dive on policies for circular economy – lessons from technical advisories

The panel discussion, moderated by **Mr. Sachin JOSHI**, examined how Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), Green Public Procurement (GPP), and regional CE frameworks can catalyse transitions toward circular, resource-efficient economies.



Dr. Thomas LINDHQVIST, Senior EPR Expert, underlined the financial strain of waste management systems across Asia, noting that EPR can shift part of the cost burden to producers and consumers. However, he cautioned that funding alone cannot solve systemic issues, as recycling infrastructure often fails to recover materials at the quality needed for reuse. He stressed the need for upstream CE approaches—durable, repairable, and recyclable product design—to build resilience amid global resource pressures.



Mr. Sanjay KUMAR, Senior GPP Expert, highlighted the significant leverage of public procurement in driving circular markets. He referenced Vietnam's health sector shift from purchasing consumables to procuring services, demonstrating how lifecycle responsibility and performance-based contracting can generate more sustainable outcomes.



Mr. Martin SCHNEEKLOTH, Sector Counsellor for Circular Economy, Royal Danish Embassy in Bangkok, shared insights from Denmark's cooperation with Thailand and ASEAN countries. He noted Thailand's progress on EPR and waste management reforms, while emphasizing the need for stronger coordination, continuity, and institutional capacity to maintain momentum amid competing policy priorities.



Ms. Latifahaida ABDUL LATIF, ASEAN Secretariat, shared that the upgraded ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement now includes commitments to facilitate cross-border movement of circular products. She highlighted that operationalizing circularity in trade—from remanufacturing and recycling to reuse—will support carbon neutrality goals and regional economic resilience. Examples include enabling the movement of used cooking oil for sustainable aviation fuel and improving regional access to recycling technologies.

During the discussion, participants raised concerns about the persistent gap between policy formulation and practical, on-the-ground implementation. Panellists agreed that systemic change requires more than regulatory frameworks: it depends on consumer and retailer engagement, lifecycle-based procurement, local adaptation of policies, and long-term behavioural shifts. They stressed that implementation is iterative, requiring continuous learning, unlearning outdated practices, and strengthening partnerships across government, business, and civil society.

In sum, it was a useful reminder that different economies are at different stages of maturity and sophistication when it comes to framing and implementing such policies. This difference is reflected in the policy approaches that suit national circumstances, conditions and capabilities. Amidst such diversity was a unifying message that all economies acknowledged and recognised the importance of circular economy and SCP as the only way forward to growth and development. EPR and GPP, at the opposite tail ends of the value chain, are recognised as “must haves” for more governments and regional blocs if they wish to increase their participation in the regional and global value chains.

Session 5: Climate and Materials Nexus - From Diagnosis to Action

Panellists:

- Ms. Juhi BANSAL, NDC and LT-LEDS Specialist, UNFCCC
- Mr. Vinay SINGH, Climate Change Expert, SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component
- Mr. Dilovarsho DUSTZODA, Advisor, CAREC (Online)
- Mr. Sanjay VASHIST, Director, Climate Action Network South Asia

*This session, moderated by **Mr. Ranga PALLAWALA**, explored how material use, resource efficiency, and circular economy principles can be systematically embedded into climate policy, highlighting why the climate–material nexus remains underutilised despite its potential to deliver significant mitigation and resilience benefits.*



From the global climate governance perspective, **Ms. Juhi BANSAL** stressed that future NDCs must shift from high-level commitments to real transformation. She emphasised integrating circularity and demand-side strategies into mitigation and adaptation actions, including the use of indicators such as material footprints and incentives for reduction, reuse, and efficiency. She underlined the need to translate national ambition into sectoral and subnational roadmaps, empower implementing ministries, and ensure private-sector alignment to avoid greenwashing.



From the Pacific region, **Mr. Vinay SINGH** highlighted that although Pacific Island countries contribute minimally to global emissions, they bear extreme adaptation burdens due to geographic vulnerability. He noted that circular economy and material efficiency can strengthen resilience by cutting reliance on imported virgin materials, lowering costs, supporting local innovation, and creating jobs rooted in indigenous knowledge. Material efficiency, he explained, reduces pressure on natural resources, extends product lifecycles, and frees fiscal space for adaptation—yet is still vastly underused in national climate strategies.



Drawing on Central Asian experience, **Mr. Dilovarsho DUSTZODA** emphasised that data is the foundation of climate–material integration. He explained how Kazakhstan’s green economy reforms and circular pilots in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan demonstrate the power of data-driven action, particularly as countries face increasing requirements linked to global trade regulations such as the EU’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism. He stressed that harmonised and integrated data systems can turn information into actionable assets for investment, resilience planning, and climate policy implementation.



From South Asia, **Mr. Sanjay VASHIST** explained that linking materials and climate objectives can unlock substantial climate finance and private-sector investment. He highlighted high-potential circular sectors—waste management, e-waste recycling, sustainable electronics, and circular textiles—which could collectively reduce resource use by 19%, increase efficiency by 12%, and cut emissions by 17% by 2050. He underscored the importance of transparent data, domestic budget allocation, strong governance, and international partnerships—including via the EU Global Gateway—to scale climate-aligned circular solutions.

In the discussion, panellists and participants converged on several themes:

- Integrating circular economy and SCP into climate strategies can accelerate cost-effective mitigation and strengthen resilience.
- Data-driven policymaking is essential for identifying material hotspots, designing incentives, and attracting investment.
- Climate finance can be unlocked through circular models that reduce material dependency and build local economic opportunities.

- Public–private collaboration and regional cooperation are necessary to develop bankable circular projects and align national strategies with global frameworks.

Mr. PALLAWALA closed by noting that future climate progress depends on recognising materials as a central climate priority—where circularity, efficiency, and innovation work together to reduce emissions, enhance resilience, and create sustainable growth.

Session 6: Celebrating Leadership - Circular Economy and SCP Inspirational Practices

Circular Economy practices by start-ups

Panellists:

- Mr. Nophol TECHAPHANGAM, Founder and CEO, norrnorn
- Mr. Aaron BOUCHANE, Country Director, People in Need Cambodia and Laos
- Ms. Ingrid van GINKEL, Managing Director, Husk Ventures (Online)
- Mr. Adi R. NUGROHO, CEO & Co-founder of MYCL (Online)

*Moderated by **Mr. Thomas THOMAS, ACEBA/ARAIBA**, the session spotlighted four start-ups and one grant implementer demonstrating how circular business models can solve real “pain points,” create quality jobs, and attract impact-aligned finance.*



norrnorn (Thailand and Indonesia) – Mr. Nophol TECHAPHANGAM: A “product-as-a-service” model for mattresses combines monthly subscriptions with free end-of-life take-back, disassembly, and recycling. The firm finances assets through green bonds and digital investment tokens, cross-subsidising recycling with subscription margins while investing in new recycling technologies. The model improves access to premium products, reduces illegal disposal, and aligns with younger consumers’ preference for use over ownership.



People in Need (Cambodia & Lao PDR) – Mr. Aaron BOUCHANE (grant implementer): To tackle ~30% food loss between farm and point of sale, the team mapped six priority value chains (e.g., cassava, corn, cashew, sugarcane, coconut) and identified waste-to-value pilots. In cashew, for example, prunings, apples, shells, and testa can be valorised (e.g., oil extraction, biofuel for garments). Lessons: align with government programs; provide practical TA (finance, accounting, marketing); fix the “missing middle” in SME financing; and tailor support to entrepreneurs’ stage and ambition.



Husk Ventures (Cambodia, online) – Ms. Ingrid van Ginkel: Converts rice husk waste into biochar via pyrolysis, generating carbon removal credits and blending biochar into crop-specific regenerative fertilisers that retain water/nutrients and enhance soil microbiology. The model diversifies revenues (fertiliser sales + carbon credits), sequesters carbon, and builds smallholder resilience.



MYCL (Indonesia, online) – Mr. Adi R. Nugroho: Produces a mycelium-based leather alternative grown on agricultural residues—lower CO₂, biodegradable, high performance—supplying 600+ B2B/B2C clients in 40 countries, from artisans to auto OEMs. The decentralised production with village partners has created 40+ green jobs and ~90% higher incomes for two farmer communities. Strong impact records helped secure low-interest, non-collateralised loans (e.g., 0.5% in Japan).

Cross-cutting insights:

1. **Commercial viability is essential.** Circularity must meet a clear customer need and “pencil out.”
2. **Impact measurement early** (GHG, waste diverted, jobs, incomes) unlocks concessional finance, customer trust, and faster scaling.
3. **Patient timelines** are realistic; moving from pilot to scale takes years.
4. **Ecosystem enablers matter**—policy alignment, technical assistance, and accessible finance (especially for MSMEs) accelerate adoption.

Overall, the session showed that when policy, practice, and financing align, start-ups can transform waste streams into value, strengthen rural livelihoods, and deliver measurable climate and resource benefits, turning circular ideas into bankable, people-centred businesses.

Session 7: Circular Economy Policy and Practices Linkages

Panellists:

- Mr. Assylkhan AITZHANOV, Managing director of Strategy and Analytics · International Green Technologies & Investments Center (IGTIC)
- Mr. Siddarth LULLA, Partner, Circular Economy, Climate Solutions, Green Finance, Intellecap
- Ms. Mei FENG, Programme Manager, EU Delegation to China
- Ms. Maria Cristina A. FRANCISCO, Chief, Environmental Education and Information Division, Environmental Management Bureau-Department of Environment and Natural Resources Philippines

*This session, moderated by **Dr. Arab HOBALLAH**, explored how top-down circular economy policies and bottom-up business innovation can reinforce each other, and why this link is still often weak in practice.*



From **Kazakhstan**, **Mr. Assylkhan AITZHANOV** explained that the Environmental Code, developed with OECD support, sets clear requirements for waste reduction, recycling and waste management plans for large polluters. Policy drafts and a new national waste management concept must be consulted with business associations and SMEs, but implementation hinges on a workable **finance architecture**. Kazakhstan is using green finance and green bonds, complemented by IFIs and blended finance, while acknowledging high interest rates and inflation as major barriers. Through a UNIDO–GEF programme (GCIP), over 120 green start-ups have received acceleration support and at least 10 have secured funding, illustrating how international partnerships plus national frameworks can translate policy intent into real projects.



From **India and South Asia**, **Mr. Siddharth LULLA** emphasised that circular economy has evolved from “nice to have” to industrial strategy, driven by policies such as EPR, plastic bans, resource-efficiency guidelines and emerging textile EPR. These create strong signals that stimulate innovation in areas like alternative materials, water treatment and cleaner production. Yet SMEs still face fragmented regulations, limited access to suitable finance, and capacity gaps. He stressed the need for an ecosystem combining knowledge, networks, capital and technology: grants and subsidies for early pilots, impact investors for scaling, and tailored instruments such as sustainability loans, outcome-based financing and de-risking mechanisms. He also suggested that SWITCH-Asia could help develop regional circular economy guidelines to facilitate technology transfer, finance and policy coherence.



Speaking from the **EU–China cooperation perspective**, **Ms. Mei FENG** described China’s top-down system anchored in **Five-Year Plans** with binding carbon and resource targets, bans (e.g. ultra-thin plastic bags) and incentive measures (standards development, subsidies, EPR schemes). These plans cascade to provinces, sectors and enterprises, forcing firms to adapt while encouraging innovation through standards and financial incentives. She highlighted SWITCH-Asia projects in textile clusters and plastic/food-delivery packaging that tried to apply circular roadmaps with SMEs and family businesses. Challenges include low awareness, survival pressures after COVID-19, and consumers’ reluctance to change habits, meaning that **policy mandates must be paired with practical tools, standards and consumer engagement**. She also noted China’s growing interest in learning from EU Green Deal and EPR experience, and the quiet but real growth of local bottom-up initiatives.



From the **Philippines**, **Ms. Maria Cristina FRANCISCO** outlined a growing policy-base climate change laws, ecological solid waste management, a national marine litter plan, EPR for plastic packaging and EU-supported green economy initiatives. Large enterprises are starting to respond (e.g. SM Supermalls and Nestlé buy-back schemes for PET bottles), but face **bottlenecks in recycling infrastructure, local government capacity and downstream markets** for recycled products. SMEs are still under-represented in these programmes. She underlined the need for clearer communication strategies, behaviour change, and ensuring that circular policies are seen by businesses as opening access to global markets and better competitiveness, not as mere compliance burdens.

In the discussion, panellists and participants converged on several themes:

- **Legal frameworks and finance must talk to SMEs**, not just large firms – including access to blended and green finance at conditions they can realistically meet.
- **Mindset and consumption patterns** are a structural barrier: shifting from “buy new, upgrade, discard” to valuing durability, repair and reuse require role-modelling, education and consumer incentives.
- **Policy coherence and dialogue** are essential: top-down targets and standards must be informed by bottom-up innovation, local realities and social impacts, with attention to vulnerable groups.
- **Regional and international collaboration**, including platforms like SWITCH-Asia, UNIDO and others, can accelerate technology diffusion, capacity building, impact measurement and the design of bankable circular models.

The moderator concluded by stressing that successful circular economy transitions need: the right legal frameworks, accessible green finance, realistic implementation mechanisms, multi-stakeholder consultation, and a continuous feedback loop where policies enable practice and practices reshape policy.

Session 8: Sector deep dives - Facilitating uptake of Circular Economy Practices Across Key Sectors with focus on construction, agri-food, plastics, textile and leather

The Parallel breakout sessions were divided into four groups to discuss including key sectors with significant circular economy opportunities include plastics, food and agriculture, construction and textile and leather. These sessions dove into the solutions for the uptake of Circular Economy in these sectors, in the Asia-Pacific region.

The report session was facilitated by **Sachin JOSHI**, Key Expert, SCP Policy Options and SDG12 Progress, SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component.

Breakout 1: Construction



The discussion focused on how the construction industry could transition toward a more circular and sustainable model through innovation, collaboration, and the development of consistent policy frameworks. **Mr. Florian BERANEK**, Senior Expert for Construction at SWITCH-Asia PSC, began the session by outlining its objectives: to sharpen understanding of the complexity and interlinkages across the different stages of construction; to identify barriers and enablers of circularity; to formulate policy recommendations aimed at increasing the use of secondary materials; and to ensure alignment of these recommendations with international standards and commitments.

Florian provided a comprehensive overview of the six stages of the built environment—urban and rural planning and zoning, planning and design of engineered structures, materials, construction works, maintenance and facility management, and deconstruction and demolition. He emphasised that these stages form an interconnected system that requires integrated circular approaches. Using the Wheel Model for Circular Economy in Construction, he illustrated how interventions at different points in the construction cycle can close material loops, reduce waste, and improve resource efficiency.

The collective discussion focused on the circularity of materials as the key lever for transformation. Participants examined opportunities and barriers related to secondary (raw) materials (SRM) across the full lifecycle—from deconstruction and demolition to the production and use of recycled materials. The conversation underscored the importance of controlling and regulating the deconstruction process, conducting thorough material assessments, and prioritising reuse and recycling while managing hazardous components responsibly.

Participants highlighted the need to legally define specialised deconstruction contractors, adapt urban mining models to recover valuable secondary raw materials, and establish standards and certification schemes to ensure the quality and safety of secondary materials. Such measures were seen as essential to facilitate their integration into new construction projects and to promote confidence among market actors. The session also emphasised the role of green public procurement in driving demand for recycled content and recyclable materials, and the need to minimise the environmental and health risks associated with traditional demolition practices.

Policy discussions revolved around identifying suitable governance and policy models—including nonregulatory, co-governance, economic, and regulatory approaches—to address the identified barriers. Participants recognised that successful circularity in construction depends not only on policy coherence but also on collaboration among governments, industry actors, and local communities.

In conclusion, the session reaffirmed that advancing circularity in the construction sector requires a systemic approach that links all stages of the construction lifecycle, integrates secondary materials effectively, and aligns national actions with international sustainability commitments and inclusive socio-economic development goals.

Breakout 2: Agri-food



The discussion highlighted the urgent need to transform agri-food systems to achieve a circular economy, shifting from linear production to models where resources are continuously reused, valorised, and kept at their highest value for as long as possible.

Reported by **Dr. Kanat SULTANALIEV**, American University of Central Asia, the session emphasised that circularity in agri-food systems extends beyond waste management. It requires rethinking production systems from the outset—designing supply chains and processes that regenerate natural systems, reduce emissions, and turn by-products into secondary resources such as animal feed, fertilisers, or bio-based materials. Participants agreed that such a transition relies on enabling frameworks supported by innovation, technology, policy coherence, and market incentives.

Country examples showcased the breadth of opportunities across the region. In Indonesia, the **“Low-Carbon Rice”** initiative demonstrated how precision agriculture and improved water management can significantly reduce emissions while enhancing productivity—illustrating how frontier technologies can create both ecological and climate value. From **Myanmar**, the **PRET project** used the **tea value chain** to show how reducing dependency on **fossil energy** at the processing stage can form a viable circular business model built on renewable and low-carbon sources. **Vietnam’s “Bean-to-Bar”** example highlighted how the cocoa sector can transform by-products into high-value goods. This reinforced the importance of **eco-design** and **early-stage research**—often supported by **Life Cycle Assessment** to verify the economic, environmental, and social value of circular agri-food innovations.

Scaling these successful practices faces critical challenges, particularly for **SMEs** who struggle with **access to finance** for circular innovations. To overcome this, the following actions are needed to inform and shape the next generation of **standards and policies**:

1. **Financial Incentives:** Governments must create targeted mechanisms, including **tax breaks and financial incentives**, to de-risk and promote investments in circular solutions.
2. **Financial Sector Awareness:** More awareness is needed in the **financial sector** about the technical and economic viability of CE business models.
3. **Government Mechanisms:** Governments should create dedicated mechanisms for the ecosystem to work, such as developing **taxonomies or classification systems** to accurately define and categorise circular economy investments.
4. **Research and Behaviour:** The involvement of **research** (especially Life cycle assessments) is critical to validate solutions, while mechanisms must also account for and enable **behavioural change** among producers and consumers for systemic adoption.

In conclusion, the agri-food discussions reaffirmed that circularity offers significant opportunities for value creation, climate resilience, and rural development. However, long-term transformation depends on aligning policy, finance, technology, and behavioural incentives to enable scalable, market-driven circular business models across the region.

Breakout 3: Plastics



The discussion explored how countries across Asia and the Pacific can accelerate the transition toward a circular plastics economy through regulatory measures, upstream interventions, innovation, and strengthened market systems.

Mr. Hun Yang SOON, Eco-Ideal Consulting Sdn Bhd, representing the rapporteur team, opened the report by outlining the broad objective of the breakout discussion: to identify practical policy and market measures that can reduce plastic waste, support circular business models, and facilitate the responsible use of recycled and alternative materials. Participants included over 20 representatives from Sri Lanka, Fiji, Nepal, Myanmar and other countries, offering a diverse set of perspectives and experiences.

The group recognised that achieving circularity in plastics requires holistic solutions—not only focusing on end-of-life waste management, but intervening upstream in design, production, and material choice. The discussion highlighted extended producer responsibility (EPR) as a cornerstone policy to ensure accountability of producers and encourage investment in circular systems. Participants also emphasised the need for legislation to regulate or phase out single-use plastics, supported by meaningful penalties and effective enforcement.

A strong recurring theme was the importance of producer obligations and product redesign. Participants noted that regulatory requirements mandating the inclusion of recycled content in packaging could drive market demand for secondary plastics. To complement these measures, tax incentives and green financing were suggested to encourage companies to incorporate recycled materials or invest in recycling-specific research and development. Participants also stressed the need for technical standards and safety guidelines, as certain countries—such as Sri Lanka—currently restrict the use of recycled materials in food-related packaging, posing a barrier to circularity.

The group discussed the role of technology and innovation, including the development of easily separable materials and the use of mobile applications to improve information access across the value chain. A particularly notable contribution came from Fiji, where participants suggested leveraging indigenous and readily available materials, such as coconut shells for drinkware and banana leaves for packaging, as low-tech, culturally appropriate alternatives to plastics.

Market development was recognised as an essential component of the transition. Participants expressed strong interest in product-as-a-service models, as well as “reuse and return” schemes that could reduce reliance on disposable plastic packaging. Participants noted that accelerating these models requires improvements in collection infrastructure, quality control systems, and incentives across the entire supply chain.

In conclusion, the session reaffirmed that circularity in the plastics sector rests on an integrated approach linking regulation, producer responsibility, technological innovation, and consumer behaviour change. The discussions highlighted the need for clear standards, supportive policies, and targeted incentives to strengthen recycling markets, promote safe and effective use of recycled content, and scale up viable alternatives. Participants agreed that collaborative efforts across governments, the private sector, and communities are essential to building a circular plastics economy that supports inclusive and sustainable development across the region.

Breakout 4: Textile and leather



The discussion although was predominantly textile-focused, reflecting the strong representation from the textile industry, the session provided rich insights on how innovation, scalable solutions, and supportive policies can drive systemic circularity across textile and garment value chains.

The session opened with an overview by **Dr. Rene VAN BERKEL**, who linked SWITCH-Asia’s innovation framework to the circular transformation required in the textile and apparel sector. He highlighted the complexity of textile ecosystems and the need for integrated approaches that address materials, technology, markets, and policy simultaneously. Four SWITCH-Asia grant projects then shared their experiences, including Mongolia’s cashmere initiative focusing on energy and material efficiency and the creation of new products from short-length fibres. Three projects from India illustrated how textile clusters—though diverse in scale, production processes, and technological readiness—are already operating at significant volumes, with hundreds of thousands of tons of textile recycling taking place annually.

A central part of the discussion focused on how to scale these existing pockets of innovation. Participants emphasised the importance of policy measures that prioritise design for circularity, particularly through **recycled-content specifications** and **clear rules governing environmental claims**, strengthening accountability and reduce greenwashing. Over the longer term, extended producer responsibility (EPR) was identified as a promising tool to drive material recovery and support circular textile markets.

On the technology front, the group noted that MSMEs often face uncertainty in selecting appropriate recycling or resource-efficient technologies. Participants stressed the need for **credible technology validation, customisation, and de-risking mechanisms** so that MSMEs are not left to navigate complex technical choices alone. Such support would lower investment risks and accelerate adoption of circular solutions.

In terms of market transformation, participants highlighted the growing importance of **storytelling**, not just branding, to communicate how products are made, the sustainability improvements achieved, and the

social value created. This narrative-based approach was seen as essential to building consumer trust and strengthening demand for circular products.

Financing also emerged as a critical enabler, with discussions emphasising the need for **more accessible and affordable investment pathways** for SMEs. Possible approaches included operational expenditure models such as equipment leasing, performance-based supply contracts, and bundling market demand to reduce technology costs. Enhanced standardisation and quality frameworks were also seen as key to increasing market confidence and unlocking financing for circular textile investments.

In conclusion, the session demonstrated strong momentum and interest in advancing circularity across textile value chains. Participants agreed that a combination of policy alignment, technology de-risking, credible standards, innovative financing models, and compelling sustainability storytelling will be essential to accelerate the sector's transition toward a more circular and climate-resilient future.

Session 9: Partnerships and Engagements

Panellists:

- Mr. Emmanuel MOYART, Team Leader, EU Trade and Private Sector Development Facility
- Ms. Neha DAS, UN Global Compact
- Dr. Michael BUCKI, Minister Counsellor for Environment and Agriculture, EU Delegation to Thailand
- Mr. Deo GABINETE, NDC Partnership
- Mr. Hannes McNULTY, Green Growth Knowledge Partnership (GGKP)

*This session, moderated by **Ms. Elodie MARIA-SUBE**, explored how cross-sector partnerships can accelerate circular economy transitions by connecting policy, business innovation, financing, and community engagement. Speakers highlighted the importance of structured collaboration to generate actionable knowledge, foster innovation, bridge policy–market gaps and strengthen enabling environments for circular value chains across Asia and the Pacific.*



From the private-sector engagement perspective, **Mr. Emmanuel MOYART** underlined the need for inclusive business participation under the EU's Global Gateway initiative, engaging large firms and MSMEs, both European and local. He emphasised the role of business associations and Chambers of Commerce in facilitating dialogue on investment climates, regulatory bottlenecks, and financing needs. He noted that Global Gateway instruments, including guarantees, can de-risk investment in higher-risk sectors, but effectiveness depends on continuous, sector-specific engagement.



From the SME and supply-chain perspective, **Ms. Neha DAS** stressed that circularity uptake among SMEs requires a package of incentives—financial support (tax benefits, preferential loans, blended finance), market signals (consumer awareness, green product promotion), and technical assistance. She highlighted the importance of policy advocacy, regional frameworks, and the catalytic role of large corporations that can drive circularity through supplier training, support, and engagement across value chains.



From the policy and trade angle, **Dr. Michael BUCKI** emphasised that EU circular economy regulations—on packaging, eco-design, and waste trade—apply to all products entering the EU market. New directives will require companies to assess social and environmental impacts across supply chains. He underlined circularity as a long-term industrial strategy addressing resource scarcity and competitiveness, calling for stronger collaboration between environment and industry ministries to transform waste into valuable secondary resources.



Representing climate policy, **Mr. Deo GABINETE** emphasised that partnerships are essential to integrating circular economy approaches into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Collaboration across governments, investors, and industries supports industrial decarbonisation, waste management, and resource efficiency while generating mitigation and adaptation benefits. He highlighted the role of partnerships in building coordinated investment pipelines, mobilising climate finance, and aligning circular solutions with economic development priorities.



From the perspective of the Green Growth Knowledge Partnership programme, **Mr. Hannes McNULTY** stressed that partnerships help transform isolated initiatives into system-level progress. He highlighted the importance of coordinated support to businesses, noting that companies benefit from integrated, rather than fragmented, assistance. Partnerships also enable ground-level insights to inform policy and promote industrial symbiosis, where one company's by-product becomes another's resource. He underscored that effective circular economy transitions rely on coherent knowledge systems and collaboration among all actors in the ecosystem.

Participants raised questions about inclusive participation, particularly for vulnerable groups, informal workers, and local communities—in circular economy initiatives. Panellists emphasised the need to embed social inclusion from the design stage, empower consumers, and ensure enabling conditions for community-level participation. They highlighted that informal waste workers, smallholder farmers, and local SMEs must be integrated into program design through capacity building, access to finance, and clearer documentation systems. Participants from the textile sector called for pre-competitive collaboration among large brands; in response, panellists underscored the importance of neutral convening platforms, such as the UN Global

Compact and GGKP, which facilitate joint innovation, align sustainability requirements across supply chains, and support SMEs in meeting procurement and sustainability criteria. The discussion concluded that coordinated partnerships, public, private, and community-led are essential to achieving scalable and inclusive circular economy outcomes.

Session 10: Reflections and Closing

The closing session, facilitated by **Dr. Zinaida FADEEVA**, Team Leader of the SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component, invited participants to reflect on four guiding questions:

1. What did you like?
2. What did you learn that was new or surprising?
3. What actions will you take with your new insights?
4. What are your top three recommendations for SWITCH-Asia looking into the future?

A wide range of stakeholders, including government representatives, international organisations, project implementers, and regional partners, shared their reflections. Their responses highlight the value of collaboration, knowledge sharing, and partnership-building, as well as the emerging priorities for the Programme moving forward.



1. What participants liked

Across all interventions, participants highlighted the spirit of collaboration, the diversity of perspectives, and the rich opportunities for networking and knowledge exchange. Many described the meeting as a platform that brought together a “community of experts” functioning as a multi-stakeholder ecosystem, enabling direct engagement between policymakers, practitioners, grantees, and development partners.

Several participants also appreciated SWITCH-Asia’s ability to create a positive environment amid global geopolitical tensions, noting that the event allowed participants to remain focused on constructive action and shared priorities. Others valued the presence of high-level government representatives, particularly from Central Asia, emphasizing that political will is essential for advancing circular economy policies.

Participants from the Pacific expressed gratitude for being included in the expanded regional coverage, highlighting the value of learning from Asian partners.

2. New or surprising insights

Participants identified various new learnings, including:

- EU’s EFSD+ guarantee scheme, which some ASEAN representatives were not previously aware of. This highlighted untapped opportunities for leveraging development finance instruments.
- Persistent challenges, financing, scaling pilots, and technology gaps, appear globally consistent. This led participants to question what underlying factors may still be overlooked in circular economy programming.
- Insights on digital building material passports as part of GPP, especially for demolition and dismantling phases of construction projects.

- Recognition of significant technology gaps among MSMEs, despite growing willingness to adopt circular solutions.
- Importance of Circular Economy Canvas in analysing opportunities for circular actions
- The evolving opportunities under the Global Gateway initiative, which offers tools that resonate more strongly with both government and business stakeholders by emphasizing partnership and investment rather than compliance obligations.



3. Actions participants will take forward

Participants outlined several follow-up areas for their own actions:

- Leveraging the SWITCH-Asia expert community to support Indonesia's circular economy efforts, with plans to share new case experiences during the next annual meeting.
- Exploring how insights on guarantee schemes and development finance can be used to support ASEAN member states.
- Applying the Global Gateway approach to strengthen partnerships with governments and businesses.
- Utilising new ideas such as digital construction passports to influence national GPP frameworks.
- Enhancing MSME outreach by communicating the business risks of non-compliance, which has proven effective in driving attention and action.



4. Recommendations for SWITCH-Asia's future work

Participants provided a wide range of recommendations:

Scaling and knowledge transfer

- Scale up best practices across the region and key sectors.
- Strengthen mechanisms for replication and investment-readiness, ensuring successful grant projects can become bankable.
- Enhance exchanges with European institutions and technical bodies, especially in sectors like construction where Europe holds advanced expertise.

Finance and enabling conditions

- Improve access to green finance, including pathways to transform non-bankable projects into bankable ones through guarantee schemes and blended finance.
- Focus not only on MSME financing but also on preparing markets, including standards and supply chain conditions that enable MSMEs to compete.

Local community and MSME engagement

- Strengthen partnerships with local communities to encourage behavioural change and ensure inclusive circular economy transitions.
- Address technology gaps that hinder MSME adoption of circular processes.

Policy coherence and regional fit

- Reduce policy fragmentation across sectors and countries by promoting more streamlined regional approaches.
- Ensure that SWITCH-Asia initiatives are fit for purpose and aligned with the realities of regional and national contexts, such as ASEAN supply chain structures and varying institutional capacities.

Programme synergies and event design

- Increase synergies between the grant and policy components to enhance shared impact.
- Maintain SWITCH-Asia's strong emphasis on stakeholder interaction, as many participants noted that face-to-face exchanges offer more value than technical documentation alone.
- Consider hosting a future annual conference in the Pacific region to strengthen regional inclusion.



Dr. FADEEVA highlighted the strong sense of continuity and collaboration within the SWITCH-Asia community. She appreciated the opportunity to reconnect with long-standing partners while welcoming many new projects into the Programme's growing network. She noted the value of linking technology, financing, policy, and business action, and emphasised how grants can effectively support the circular transformation of supply chains. She also recognised the important contributions from regional organisations, financing institutions, and government representatives throughout the event. She reaffirmed SWITCH-Asia's commitment to working flexibly and creatively under challenging circumstances and thanked all participants for their active engagement.

Mr. Olivier LOUIS, Head of Sector, Asia-Pacific Investment & Budget Support, DG INTPA, European Commission, thanked participants for their strong energy and practical insights over the two-day seminar. He noted that the discussions helped clarify the breadth of the circular economy concept and highlighted the productive connection between policy work and on-the-ground implementation. He appreciated the humility shown by participants in reflecting on areas for improvement and welcomed the clear alignment with the Global Gateway approach. He encouraged project teams to reach out to EU Delegations to explore financing opportunities and strengthen links with financial institutions. He concluded by reminding everyone that the central purpose of these efforts is to improve livelihoods and create long-term, sustainable benefits for people in Asia.

PART IV. SWITCH-ASIA GRANT PROJECT MEETING



*The session, facilitated by **Dr. Arab HOBALLAH**, Senior Expert for SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component, and **Dr. René VAN BERKEL**, Co-convenor of ACEBA, Senior Expert for SWITCH-Asia, Member of the International Resource Panel, and Faculty at Thammasat University, featured roundtable discussions across four sectors: Textiles & Leather, Building & Construction, Agri-food, and Plastics & Packaging. Participants explored scalable solutions for the Circular Economy, focusing on moving from pilot projects to large-scale transformation, identifying project-based SCP solutions, and understanding the conditions needed for scaling.*

The discussions emphasised the role of communication in bridging the knowledge-action gap, while highlighting the importance of policies, standardisation, market opportunities, and financing in creating mechanisms to support wider adoption of CE solutions.

In the **Plastics & Packaging sector**, scaling SCP solutions involves both external enablers, such as EPR policies, and internal project-led activities that generate self-sustaining solutions. Projects focus on collecting data and evidence to build confidence, raising awareness through education, and valorising plastic waste, while leveraging innovative tools like the Resource Efficient Cleaner Production Tool (RECP) digital tool, waste audits, and GHG emission assessments to help businesses improve environmental performance. Successful practices include replacing single-use plastics in food stores with biodegradable bowls and plates made from areca palm leaves and establishing recycling infrastructure through public-private partnerships where none existed before. Stakeholder engagement, facilitated through echo hubs, buyer-seller forums, and responsible vendor markets, enhances visibility, demand, and recognition for sustainable solutions. At the same time, creating localised product-solution fit, investable techno-feasibility reports, and early collaboration with financial institutions ensures long-term sustainability and attracts investment, making Circular Economy initiatives scalable and financially viable beyond the project lifecycle.

In the **Building & Construction sector**, scaling SCP solutions focuses on improving energy efficiency and sustainable housing in urban Mongolia. The project has developed a market delivery one-stop shop that streamlines access for households and stakeholders to insulation solutions, quality certifications, and documentation required for green loans, complemented by a web platform that provides cost estimations, replicable tools, and guidance for project replication. Financial mechanisms, including green loans, are being strengthened through engagement with local banks and ongoing legislative support, aiming to improve accessibility despite the limited purchasing power of households. Stakeholder engagement is extensive, involving parliament members, ministries, district authorities, and local CSOs such as the Red Cross, along with private sector contributions, helping raise awareness and implement installations, with over 500 households insulated to date. The project also emphasises capacity building for MSMEs in the construction sector, providing training to ensure sustainable human resources and the continuity of skills beyond the project lifecycle, thereby supporting long-term market transformation and scalable Circular Economy solutions.

In the **Textiles & Leather sector**, discussions focused on scaling sustainable and resource-efficient solutions, particularly for textiles clusters. Key approaches include promoting shared economy infrastructures to benefit a larger number of MSMEs, digitisation of carbon inventories, and creating digital networks for solution providers. Projects also emphasised de-risking early-stage innovations with evaluations to ensure market readiness and viable business models. Market linkages were highlighted as critical, including the need for HSN codes for recycled textiles to facilitate trade incentives and government-backed procurement policies that encourage MSMEs to adopt sustainable practices. Successful examples include eco-label initiatives in Mongolia's Kashmir sector and government-linked performance-based incentives, such as subsidies linked to energy audits in India, which help businesses adopt sustainable practices. Financing mechanisms were also discussed, including shared green infrastructure, corporate guarantees, and novel models where operational expenses, rather than capital expenditures, drive adoption, making sustainable technologies more accessible for MSMEs. These combined efforts aim to ensure scalable, market-linked, and financially viable Circular Economy solutions across the textiles sector.

In the **Agri-food sector**, scaling SCP solutions focuses on increasing mechanisation at the farm and cooperative levels, integrating green energy solutions, and enhancing processing capabilities to create both environmental and economic benefits. Projects emphasised the importance of financing access for farmers and cooperatives to adopt new technologies and renewable energy, alongside replicating best practices supported by sound business plans and ROI analyses. Engaging industry champions within large corporations, such as Heineken in Cambodia, was highlighted as a key strategy to influence supply chains, policies, and financing at a broader level. Market transformation efforts include linking traceability systems to income generation, leveraging local and regional platforms like the Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil, and promoting farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing to increase adoption of circular practices. Additionally, technical assistance for investment readiness, including business model development and investor engagement, was identified as critical, along with the need to consolidate the fragmented financing landscape, including commercial banks, impact investors, and development finance, to ensure scalable and sustainable adoption of circular solutions across the agri-food sector.





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