# Round and Round: Why circularity and sustainability are critical to the future of global industry

**Leadership Dialogue 2**
**Friday, 12 December 2025, from 10 a.m. to 11.30 a.m.**

## A. Introduction

The seventh session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7), to be held from 8 to 12 December 2025, will feature three leadership dialogues on the UNEA-7 theme of "Advancing sustainable solutions for a resilient planet". The three leadership dialogues are:

- Leadership Dialogue 1: An Ounce of Prevention Beats a Tonne of Cure: Why addressing environmental crises is essential for human health; Thursday, 11 December 2025, from 3 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. EAT
- Leadership Dialogue 2: Round and Round: Why circularity and sustainability are critical to the future of global industry; Friday, 12 December 2025 from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. EAT.
- Leadership Dialogue 3: The Bottom Line: Why tackling environmental degradation is critical to the future of the global financial system; Friday, 12 December 2025, from 11.30 a.m. to 1 p.m. EAT

This concept note is intended to assist Member States, observers and major groups, and other stakeholders in their preparations for Leadership Dialogue 2 focusing on actions to advance resilience in the context of industry.

There will be a projected 60 per cent increase in global resource consumption by 2060, when natural resource use is expected to be responsible for 55 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, over 90 per cent of biodiversity impacts and 40 per cent of pollution, according to the Global Resources Outlook 2024. This dialogue will explore how sustainable consumption and production, and circular economy policies can enhance competitiveness and provide solutions to the three planetary environmental crises of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste.

## B. Scope and Interlinkages

This leadership dialogue will explore how to use materials more sustainably to enable the energy and digital transition and build resilience in sectors such as textiles and plastics. It will highlight scalable best practices, policy levers and the importance of social safeguards.

The shift to low-carbon energy — involving solar, wind and batteries for energy storage — and a growing reliance on digital solutions is increasing demand for minerals, such as lithium, cobalt, nickel and rare earth elements. This is raising environmental, social and supply chain risks. It also presents significant challenges for industries and the economies that depend on natural resources.

The dialogue will explore how circular value chains can reduce these impacts through sustainable production and sourcing, the use of secondary raw materials, recycling, product-life extension and the

creation of fairer markets. Artificial intelligence (AI) can be a powerful enabler of this transition. It could support everything from material traceability and digital product passports to predictive maintenance and supply chain optimization.

Rising textile demand intensifies resource use, waste and pollution, while the plastics sector presents parallel challenges across its lifecycle. Addressing these requires public-private action to eliminate unnecessary waste, promote reuse and recycling, improve product design, including moving away from unnecessary, single and short-lived products, promote safer chemical use, and harmonize policies as drivers of systemic change. This requires cooperation across the full life cycle of materials, increased transparency, improved disclosure and the embrace of initiatives like the Global Circularity Protocol for Business.

North-South dynamics will be addressed, including unequal infrastructure and technology access that hinder circularity in the Global South. The dialogue will explore how current global models risk reinforcing extractive relationships and the need to elevate South-led solutions. It will also look at how extractive patterns can be reimagined through South-led innovation.

**C. Guiding questions**

Participants will be invited to address the following questions to foster a focused dialogue:

1. What policies, partnerships and innovations, including AI, are needed to build circular value chains that reduce environmental pressures, support livelihoods and ensure long-term resource supply?
2. What can we learn from policy makers that would be helpful in advancing circularity and encouraging competitiveness while ensuring social equity?
3. What are the key linkages and take-aways for governments and business leaders in looking at resilience in industry, finance and human health?

**D. Expected Outcomes and Call for Actions**

The leadership dialogue is expected to lead to deeper collaboration and partnership across value chains. It will also introduce policy makers to measures that can enable the type of circularity that creates jobs and growth, while protecting the environment. As well, the dialogue will showcase how businesses can work with the United Nations and others to champion bold, practical and impactful action to advance circularity across sectors where the opportunity is highest. It will also be a chance for civil society to discuss the importance of robust social safeguards and increased transparency.

**Contact details**

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