

Thematic Track: Accelerating and Institutionalizing Resource Efficiency & Circular Economy in India at the World Sustainable Development Summit 2021

At the [World Sustainable Development Summit \(WSDS\) 2021 - New Delhi \(teriin.org\)](https://www.teriin.org) the thematic track on “Accelerating and Institutionalizing Resource Efficiency & Circular Economy in India” was organized on 10th February 2021 from 1.30-3.15 pm IST. The session was organized in partnership with the Strategic Partnership for the Implementation of Paris Agreement (SPIPA) project and the EU Resource Efficiency Initiative (EU-REI). The SPIPA project is funded by the EU and the German Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU). The session emphasized the significance of an integrated approach that connects all stakeholders in the waste value chain. The panellists also discussed the aspects of developing sustainable initiatives to unlock the creative potential in India and in the EU through collaborative initiatives such as India–European Innovation Centre, measures for innovators and start-ups which are expected to build in-house design facilities and render cost-effective and feasible solutions in India.

Delivering the welcome address, **Mr. R R Rashmi, Distinguished Fellow and Programme Director, Earth Science and Climate Change, TERI** highlighted that the key element driving resource efficiency and circular economy is the regulatory framework and to move ahead there is a need to look at the resource consumption patterns. He emphasized that resource efficiency and circular economy could be anchored to the actions of environmental management in different streams such as climate change, biodiversity etc.

Mrs. Astrid Schomaker, Director, Global Sustainable Development, Directorate General for Environment, European Commission mentioned that the European Union (EU) - India Joint Declaration on Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy is a crucial element for integral sustainability aiming at supporting and strengthening dialogue and cooperation between both sides on resource efficiency and circular economy. It is a unique opportunity to move ahead on sustainability goals, Paris Agreement goals, and biodiversity goals and to halt biodiversity loss and minimize pollution. She highlighted that sustainable product strategies are required to ensure less waste ending up in the environment. Therefore continuous concrete actions are required. The **Global Alliance on Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency** plays a crucial role of advocacy at the multilateral level for the global transition towards a circular economy. The Alliance acts as a forum for exchanging information and ideas, finding knowledge gaps, addressing implementation challenges for both enterprises and policymakers, and promoting the benchmarking of international interactions. She highlighted the fact that for India, having the largest middle-class population and it being the 4th largest country in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, a focus on resource efficiency and circular economy, could help mitigate the negative externalities and create benefits for the environment by significantly reducing its emissions.

Dr. Bhawna Singh, Scientist 'E' (Resource Efficiency Cell), MoEFCC, stated that the Government of India accords top primacy to Sustainable Development Goals. Promoting resource efficiency is the top priority of the government and the same is reflected in various government policies like the Swachh Bharat Mission, E-vehicles adoption, Waste Management Rules, etc. She highlighted that resource efficiency and circular economy are opportunities to address resource constraints and decouple economic growth from adverse social and environmental impacts like resource depletion, pollution etc.. To mainstream resource efficiency across all sectors and regions of the country, Dr. Bhawna mentioned that the MoEFCC has prepared a draft National Resource Efficiency Policy 2019.

The panel discussion on the thematic track titled Accelerating and Institutionalizing Resource Efficiency & Circular Economy in India was moderated by **Mr. Michael Bucki, Counsellor, EU Delegation to India**. He highlighted the important aspects of the EU–India partnership and collaboration on resource efficiency and circular economy and how this partnership could advocate transformational development in a multi-lateral environment.

Dr. Janez Potocnik, Co-Chair of UN International Resources Panel, Former European Commissioner for Environment in his opening remarks pointed out that EU-India Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy Partnership provides an opportunity to both sides to exchange information and lessons learned. He mentioned that the concept of circular economy has emerged from waste management policy mixed with the concept of sustainability. He stressed the need to re-shape the governance system, the consumption and production patterns for circular economy transition. Circular economy is a holistic concept to diverge economic development from its negative social and environmental effects.

Ms. Seema Arora, Deputy Director-General, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) highlighted that industries are the key players to bring forth the transition to a circular economy. The industries help in creating an enabling ecosystem, building awareness, synergies and symbiosis which enables resource efficiency and circular economy in India. She further stated that CII is working on identifying sectors that can bring greenhouse gas emissions reduction and to recognize the connection between resource efficiency and climate change.

Dr. Rachna Arora, Team Leader, EU-REI II, GIZ India acknowledged the need for global governance for resource efficiency and circular economy. She mentioned that collaboration between businesses, innovators, governments, civic society organizations and research and academia would be critical for enabling and accelerating the transition to a circular economy. She highlighted that adoption of circular economy instruments by the private sector can refer to the European standards and inter-ministerial cooperation at the national level is required.

Ms. Ekta Narain, Director - Business Development, Recykal stated that Recykal aims to bring all stakeholders in the waste management value chain on a single platform including waste generators, collectors, processors, recyclers and brand owners through digital technology facilitating transparent and traceable material flow and transactions. She highlighted that Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) in India is predominantly handled by the informal sector and digital technologies can support them.

Mr. Joseph CEO, FOV Biogas India Pvt Ltd mentioned that cost-effective waste-to-energy plants implemented in India are using an innovative polymer fabric material for digesters instead of steel or concrete biogas digesters resulting in reliable, accessible, and cost-effective biogas production.

Mr. Asad Warsi, Project Management Consultant, Indore Municipal Corporation highlighted the importance of comprehensive models with centralized and decentralized waste treatment processes. He mentioned that segregating waste at source could contribute to a circular economy and optimize resource efficiency. He emphasized that the Indore model could act as a lighthouse project for the entire country.

The EU-Resource Efficiency Initiative Phase II was launched at the session in the presence of EU-REI consortium members and thematic track panellists and delegates. The initiative aims to mainstream resource efficiency and circular economy in the Indian economy and industry based

on a life cycle approach and create an ecosystem to enhance resource protection and minimizing environmental impacts.

Dr. Ajay Mathur acknowledged the strengthened partnership between the EU and India. He highlighted the success of EU-REI phase I and how it contributed to institutionalizing resource efficiency in government policy. Dr. Mathur further flagged how phase II could draw on existing cooperation and collaboration, foster policy dialogues, knowledge exchange, research and innovation.

The session concluded with a Vote of Thanks by Dr. Shilpi Kapur, Senior Fellow, TERI

The video recording of the session is available at: [Thematic Track: Accelerating and Institutionalizing Resource Efficiency & Circular Economy in India - YouTube](#)