

Plenary Session: Examining interlinkages to Climate Action, Biodiversity protection and Circular Economy

At the [World Sustainable Development Summit \(WSDS\) 2021 - New Delhi \(teriin.org\)](https://www.teriin.org) the plenary session on “**Examining interlinkages to Climate Action, Biodiversity protection and Circular Economy**” was organized on 11th February 2021 from 5.15 -6.30 pm IST. The session was organized in partnership with the Strategic Partnership for the Implementation of Paris Agreement (SPIPA) project along with the EU International Urban Cooperation India (IUC-India). The SPIPA project is funded by the EU and the German Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU). This plenary session provided an opportunity to deliberate and discuss how to reinstate and strengthen circular economy thinking to prevent biodiversity loss. The session also facilitated discussion on how nature-based solutions can help decouple our dependence on natural resources and associated the enabling factors that will facilitate their mainstreaming.

Delivering the welcome address, **Mr. Rameshwar Prasad Gupta, Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Government of India**, highlighted the work undertaken by the MoEFCC in the sphere of climate action, biodiversity, and circular economy. He shared a quote by Mahatma Gandhi stating that the world has enough resources for people’s needs but not enough for fulfilling their greed. He emphasized the idea of sustainable lifestyle as promulgated by the Indian Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. He further stated that circular economy is the only way through which the natural eco-system can be preserved.

Mr. Christophe Manet, Head of Political Section, the EU delegation to India delivered the opening remarks and emphasized the importance of building back better from the repercussions of the pandemic. For the European Union the EU Green Deal is at the core of the required green recovery. He also stated that the ‘Whole of Government’ approach and ‘Just Transition’ will play a key role in the action against the triple challenges posed by climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation.

Ms. Inger Andersen, Under Secretary-General, United Nations and Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme, stated that while the COVID pandemic has led to increased medical waste, innovations are already in India to recycle this waste and create innovative products. She stated that the transition to a circular economy will entail a lot of effort by multiple stakeholders. She stated that multilateral Governance is the key to success. She highlighted that existing Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) are classic examples of multilateral governance.

Mr. P.V.S. Surya Kumar, Deputy Managing Director, NABARD, stated that continued reliance and the exploitation of natural resources has led to the loss of biodiversity arising from deforestation, land degradation and pollution in rivers and oceans. Nearly 50% of global income comes from nature through its services in key economic sectors like agriculture, construction, and mining. Biodiversity and the ecosystem services in the form of carbon sinks have a very important role in reducing CO₂ emissions, thereby mitigating climate change. He emphasized that curtailing biodiversity loss is important for ensuring the continued flow of ecosystem services to humans.

Ms Astrid Schomaker, Director, Global Sustainable Development, European Commission stated that biodiversity degradation also plays an important role in driving climate change impacts. She stated that top-level policy coherence is needed and the forthcoming COP26 in Glasgow in November 2021 is a big step in this direction. Similarly, the EU Green Deal also emphasizes the importance of a circular economy to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. While the world was already grappling with the disastrous impacts of climate change, the recent pandemic has aggravated the situation in terms of increased health

hazards and addressing the situation through increased investment in the form of recovery packages. She concluded that to fight climate change we will have to work as one. From governments to companies, to civil society, everybody will have to come together to find sustainable solutions.

Mr. Basile van Havre, Co-Chair, Convention on Biological Diversity emphasized the inclusion of the informal sector in the process of Just Transition. He shared examples of the countries where just transition policies have been implemented including Europe, Australia and Spain. The pertinence of circular economy lies in the fact that it allows resources to be reused and recycled thereby expanding its usage across the supply chain. The six principles of circular economy pertain to redesign, reduce, reuse, recycle, repair, and refurbish allows for increased usage of resources thereby enhancing material efficiency. He stated that the principles of circular economy can be applied to reduce the impact of both climate change and biodiversity loss.

Prof. Kazuhiko Takeuchi, President, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies stated that the need of the hour is to consider a short-term response to the current emergency created by COVID-19 while providing a long-term vision for transformative change. He highlighted the Triple R framework proposed by IGES as a viable solution. The framework involves "Responding" to the COVID crisis, taking countermeasures to "Recover", and "Redesigning" current socioeconomic systems, with an emphasis on 'just transition' to a truly sustainable and resilient world.

The discussions emphasized the key opportunities that exist across the various sector, viz. steel, aluminium, transport, construction, agriculture to list a few. Application of CE will enable reusing waste generated across various sectors and lead to the development of innovative products.

The video recording of the session is available at: [\(153\) WSDS 2021: Examining Interlinkages to Climate Action, Biodiversity Protection and Circular Economy - YouTube](#)