

DECLARATION

17th ParlAmericas Plenary Assembly
Towards a Circular Economy
November 16, 20, and 27, 2020 | Online sessions

Parliamentarians from 26 countries in the Americas and the Caribbean gathered online on November 16, 20, and 27, 2020 with the support of the Legislative Assembly of the Republic of Costa Rica, for the 17th ParlAmericas Plenary Assembly entitled *Towards a Circular Economy*.

Circular economy is a systemic approach to sustainable development designed to benefit society, the environment, and the economy. In contrast to a linear model, a circular economy is regenerative by design and aims to gradually decouple economic growth from the consumption of non-renewable resources.

The gathering fostered a productive exchange between participants focused on circular economic models that promote economic growth based on people's well-being and environmental protection, as well as their relevance in the context of economic recovery initiatives needed to address the serious socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The discussions showed that the historic crisis triggered by the pandemic provides an opportunity to move towards new development paradigms that will be decisive in economic recovery processes for building a more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable future.

Considering the above and,

WHEREAS:

1. The economic and social development achieved in the last century and current economic models exert unsustainable pressure on the environment, contribute to climate change, exacerbate economic inequalities, and lead to phenomena such as deforestation, water scarcity, food waste, and high carbon dioxide emissions that threaten people's well-being and pose serious challenges to future generations;
2. Despite the significant progress made in the hemisphere in terms of sustainable development and the climate agenda—for example with the adoption of relevant legal frameworks, adherence to related international conventions, and initiatives for raising awareness of their importance—the need to increase climate action ambitions and promote sustainable development models persists;

3. The COVID-19 pandemic and its serious socioeconomic consequences, which ECLAC describes as the worst crisis in the region's history, estimating a 9.1% drop in GDP, a 5.4% increase in unemployment, and 45.4 million more people living in poverty,¹ provide an opportunity to rethink current economic development models on the basis of a systemic shift towards more sustainable and resilient production and consumption models;
4. Circular economy is a systemic approach to development designed to benefit society,, the environment and its ecosystems, improve business resource efficiency, and provide sustainable alternatives for creating economic, social, and natural capital and reducing the negative impacts of economic activity on people and the environment, as well as its financial burden on health systems, waste management, and disaster risk management, among others;
5. Sustainable Development Goal 12 on sustainable consumption and production sets concrete objectives for advancing towards a circular economy and, together with the Convention on Biological Diversity and the 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, provides a road map for decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation, increasing resource efficiency and promoting sustainable lifestyles;
6. Climate change and environmental degradation affect countries differently and also have a disproportionate impact on women, historically marginalized and disadvantaged groups, such as Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and Indo-descendant people; people living with disabilities; displaced people and migrants; and members of the LGBTI community, among others, who are often victims of systemic discrimination whereby racism, poverty, and/or unstable living conditions intersect, disproportionately forcing members of these communities to live in areas affected by environmental hazards and as a result, experience higher levels of exposure to environmental threats and vulnerabilities and higher rates of related health problems;
7. Circular economy developed under a gender, intercultural and intersectional lens, by understanding consumer behaviours, integrating lessons learnt from traditional sustainable practices, and leveraging local value chains for sustainability, has the potential to ensure a just transition, creating opportunities and supporting the well-being of women, particularly Indigenous, Afro-descendant, Indo-descendant, low-income women, as well as those that work in the informal sector;
8. In recent years, growing activism and social and political movements led by the hemisphere's youth have been essential in putting the urgent need to address the effects of climate change and environmental degradation and their impact on the well-being of people and communities on the public agenda;
9. Parliaments are responsible for adopting legislative frameworks to ensure access to public information, foster transparency, and promote public participation in decision-making processes,

¹ https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/46146/1/S2000672_en.pdf

which are central aspects of the Paris Agreement, the Escazú Agreement, the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), and the ParlAmericas Road Map Towards Legislative Openness, and particularly relevant in the context of post-pandemic economic recovery initiatives;

10. Keeping the global average temperature increase below 1.5 °C compared to pre-industrial levels through Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement requires the adoption of circular economic models to meet the goals set to combat climate change and promote low-emission and climate-resilient development, taking into account the non-renewable nature of the planet's resources;
11. The global scale of climate change impacts requires the broadest possible cooperation among all countries and their participation in a coordinated, effective, and appropriate international response, according to their common but differentiated responsibilities and their respective capabilities and social and economic conditions, including financial and other support to low- and middle-income countries to strengthen cooperative action in the development and transfer of technologies at different stages of the technological cycle to promote a circular economy;
12. The 2030 Agenda and the concept of a circular economy incorporated in SDG 12 provide a road map to prevent the negative impacts of industrialization processes on the environment and society, decouple environmental degradation from economic growth, and move forward in achieving the goals and principles set forth in the United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development;

We undertake to:

1. Work with national and local authorities to put circular economy on the public agenda and promote its importance in mitigating the effects of climate change and its relevance in the context of post-COVID-19 economic recovery plans;
2. Urge our governments to renew and increase the ambition of Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement, oversee their implementation, and use them as a framework to design and assess legislation for economic reactivation;
3. Advocate for competent authorities to generate, compile, and disseminate disaggregated environmental information in a systematic, regular, accessible, and comprehensible manner, and ensure that it is available to the public and can inform the design of initiatives and public policies aimed at advancing the sustainable development agenda, for example tracing post-industrial and consumer waste to evaluate its impact;
4. Establish initiatives and policies that foster a fair and inclusive transition that ensures that workers in unsustainable industries are not left behind, such as training programs, as well as technical and financial assistance, to facilitate their transition to jobs in emerging green industries, while giving

particular consideration to women and people with low levels of education to avoid the persistence of existing inequalities in the linear economic model;

5. Promote and fund research, development, innovation, and entrepreneurship to stimulate transition processes towards circular economic models and the creation of green and decent jobs—for example, through initiatives to increase employment in rural areas and strengthen sustainable agricultural practices and working with the private sector to advance a green transition;
6. Adopt legislation needed to finance the transition to circular economic models by providing tax and fiscal incentives, as well as financial stimulus, to industries that adopt circular economy practices, including by assuming responsibility for their products beyond the point of sale, encourage industrial symbiosis (the waste or by-product of an industry becomes a resource for the other) and by promoting innovative mechanisms to facilitate access to multilateral funds or private capital intended to finance sustainable ventures;
7. Seek a gradual reduction in subsidies for the fossil fuel industry, put a price on pollution, and allocate these funds to social and environmental welfare programs, as well as promote the implementation of circular models, incorporate more renewables to the energy matrix, and the adoption of carbon neutral plans that include environmental and social impact assessments in all productive sectors, particularly in the extractives, including nationally-owned companies;
8. Advance policies and programs to facilitate the adoption of circular economy practices throughout the entire value chain in the tourism sector in order to foster sustainability and resilience, minimize environmental and social impacts, and enhance opportunities to strengthen the blue economy — the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods and jobs, and ocean ecosystem health;
9. Encourage feasible and low-cost reforms, such as updating building codes to reduce construction and energy waste, minimize the use of construction materials that contaminate the environment, and promote policies to reduce plastic, especially single-use plastics, stimulating innovation to make them reusable, recyclable, or compostable, and to develop biodegradable alternatives;
10. Appeal to our governments to develop public awareness programs and campaigns providing consumers and users with evidence-based information on the effects of goods and services on health and the environment, and to adopt measures that promote sustainable consumption, reduce waste, and facilitate cultural changes in consumption patterns;
11. Ensure, through our oversight function, that foreign investments are governed by the same environmental protection and circular economy principles promoted at the national level and that multinationals registered and/or operating in our jurisdiction comply with the highest international standards on environmental protection;

12. Strengthen open parliament initiatives that promote dialogue with the public, including civil society organizations, youth organizations and movements, cooperatives, universities, research centres, and businesses, with an emphasis on traditionally marginalized groups, particularly Indigenous peoples, recognizing their ancestral knowledge and practices and incorporating these contributions to enhance legislative action towards a circular economy that is inclusive and fosters the exchange of experiences and knowledge;
13. Promote the incorporation of a gender perspective and intersectional approach to the discussion and analysis of circular economic models, acknowledging the role of women in production and consumption and promoting women as agents of change by financing their green enterprises and community projects, as well as ensuring their participation in decision-making processes.
14. Recommend the implementation of institutional principles and practices for a green economy within our parliaments and public institutions, such as those set out in the *ParlAmericas Guide on Green Parliaments: Actions to Promote Sustainable Practices within Parliaments*, including promoting sustainable public procurement.

Adopted on November 27, 2020