



**ESCAP**  
Economic and Social Commission  
for Asia and the Pacific

# The Secrets to Unlocking the Next Frontier for a Circular Economy in the Asia-Pacific Region

Insights from the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network (ESBN)

**High-level 12<sup>th</sup> 3R and Circular Economy Forum in Asia-Pacific**

**Theme: Realizing Circular Societies Towards Achieving SDGs and Carbon Neutrality in Asia-Pacific**

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5 March 2025  
Jaipur, India

**1**

**Circular Economy: A Catalyst to SDG Acceleration**

**2**

**Circular Economy: Policy Landscape in Asia and the Pacific**

**3**

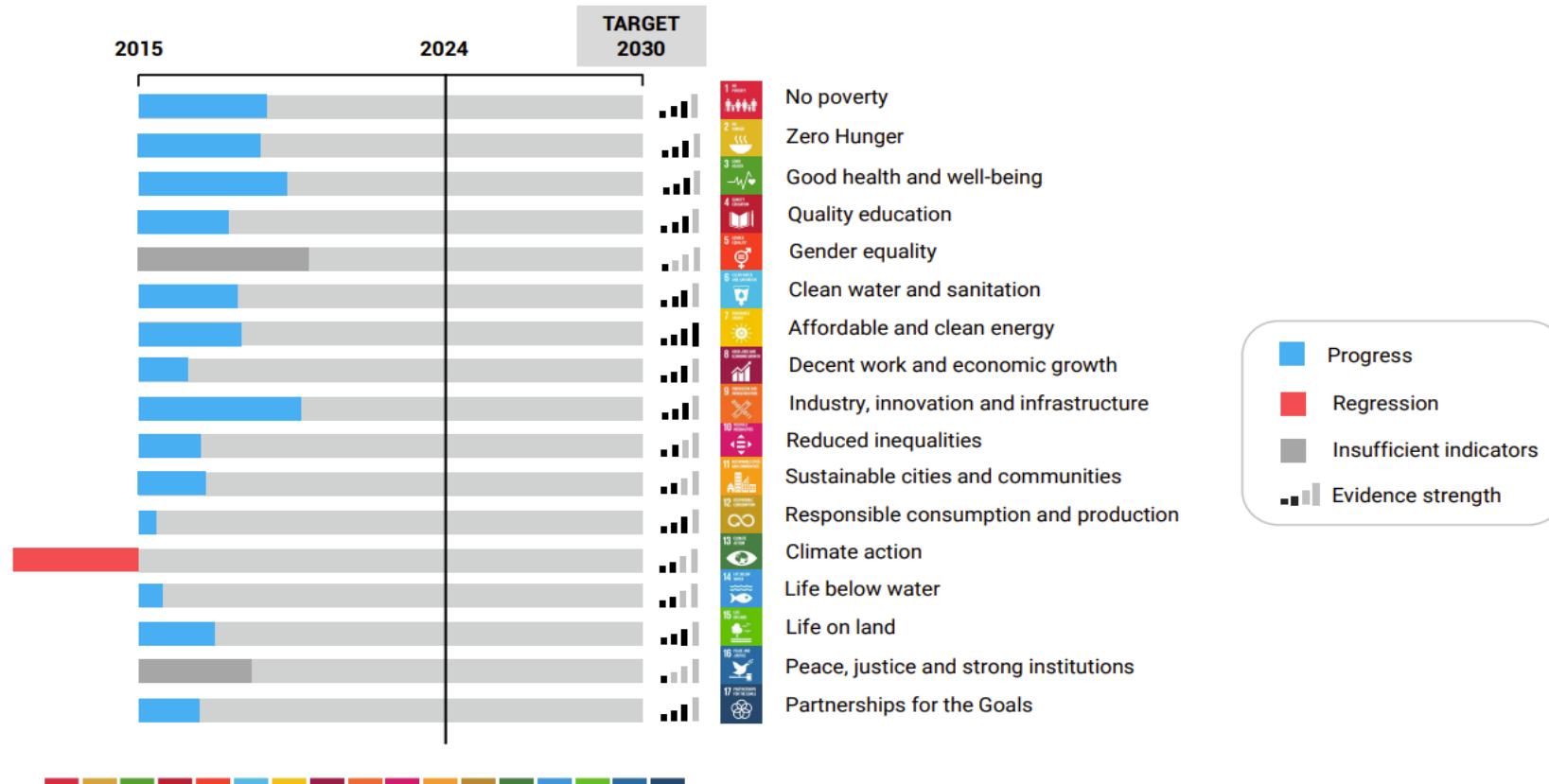
**Role of the Private sector: ESNB Platform to advance Circular Economy**



## 1 Circular Economy: A Catalyst to SDG Acceleration

ESBN Position Paper is available at: [The secrets to unlocking the next frontier for a circular economy in the Asia-Pacific Region | ESCAP](#)

# Asia-Pacific Sustainable Development Goals Progress



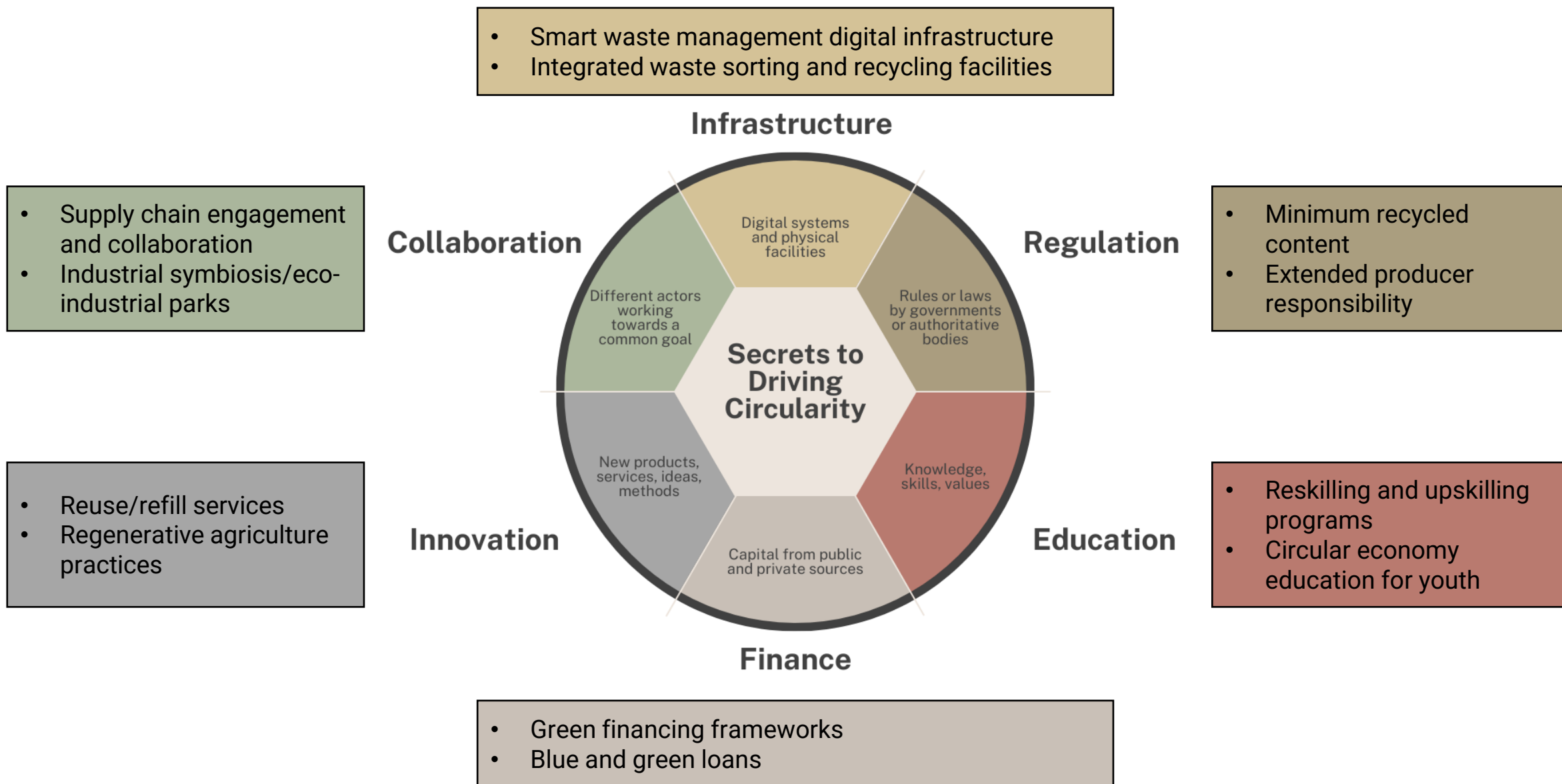
## ASIA AND THE PACIFIC SDG PROGRESS REPORT Engaging communities to close the evidence gap 2025



**Note:** Achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific will take an extraordinary collective effort. On its current trajectory, the region will not meet any of the 17 SDGs by the agreed deadline. Current estimates show these Asia-Pacific will miss 86% of the 117 measured targets by 2030

Source: [Link](#) to Report

# Six Secrets to Driving Circularity in Action



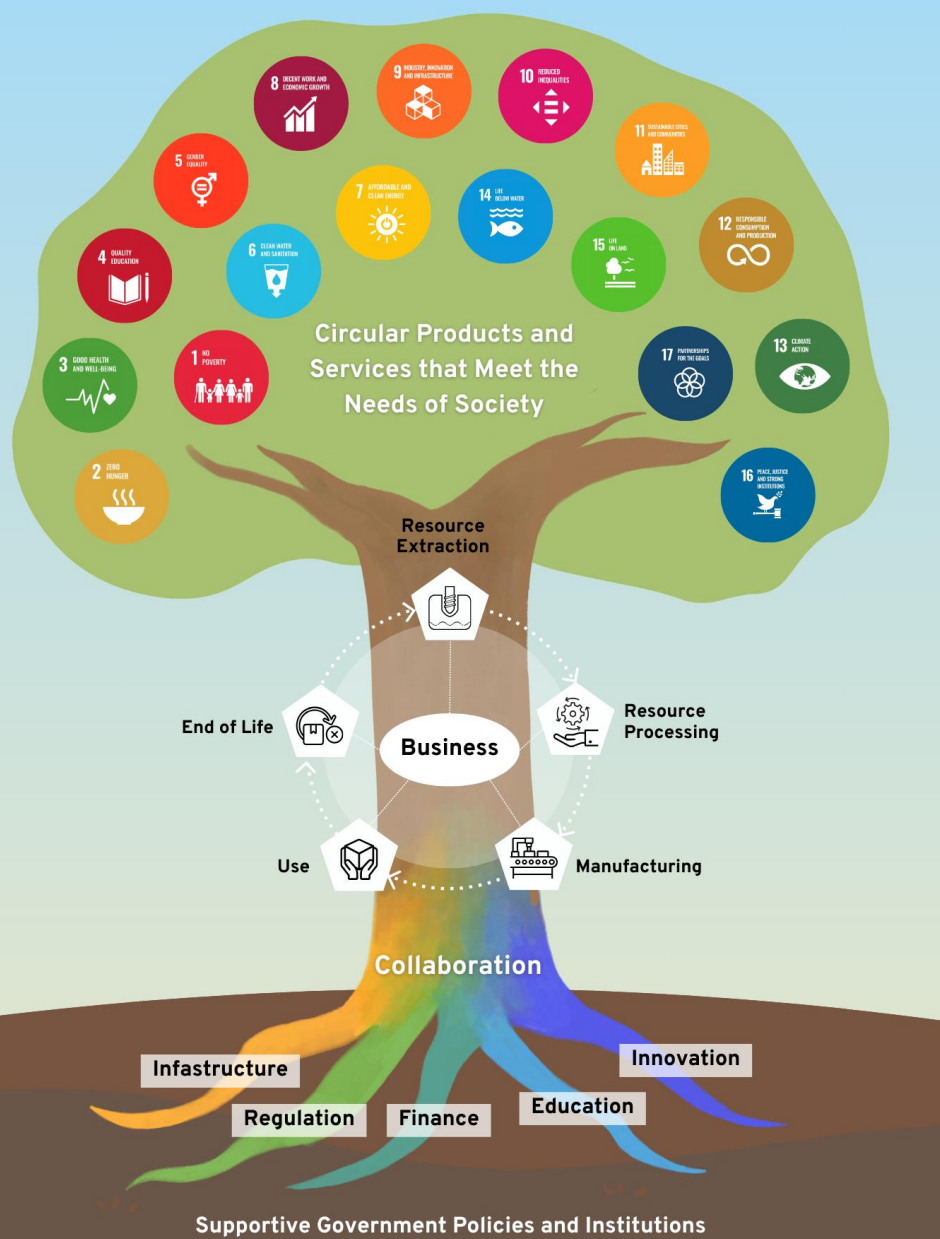


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## **Circular Economy: Policy Landscape in Asia and the Pacific**







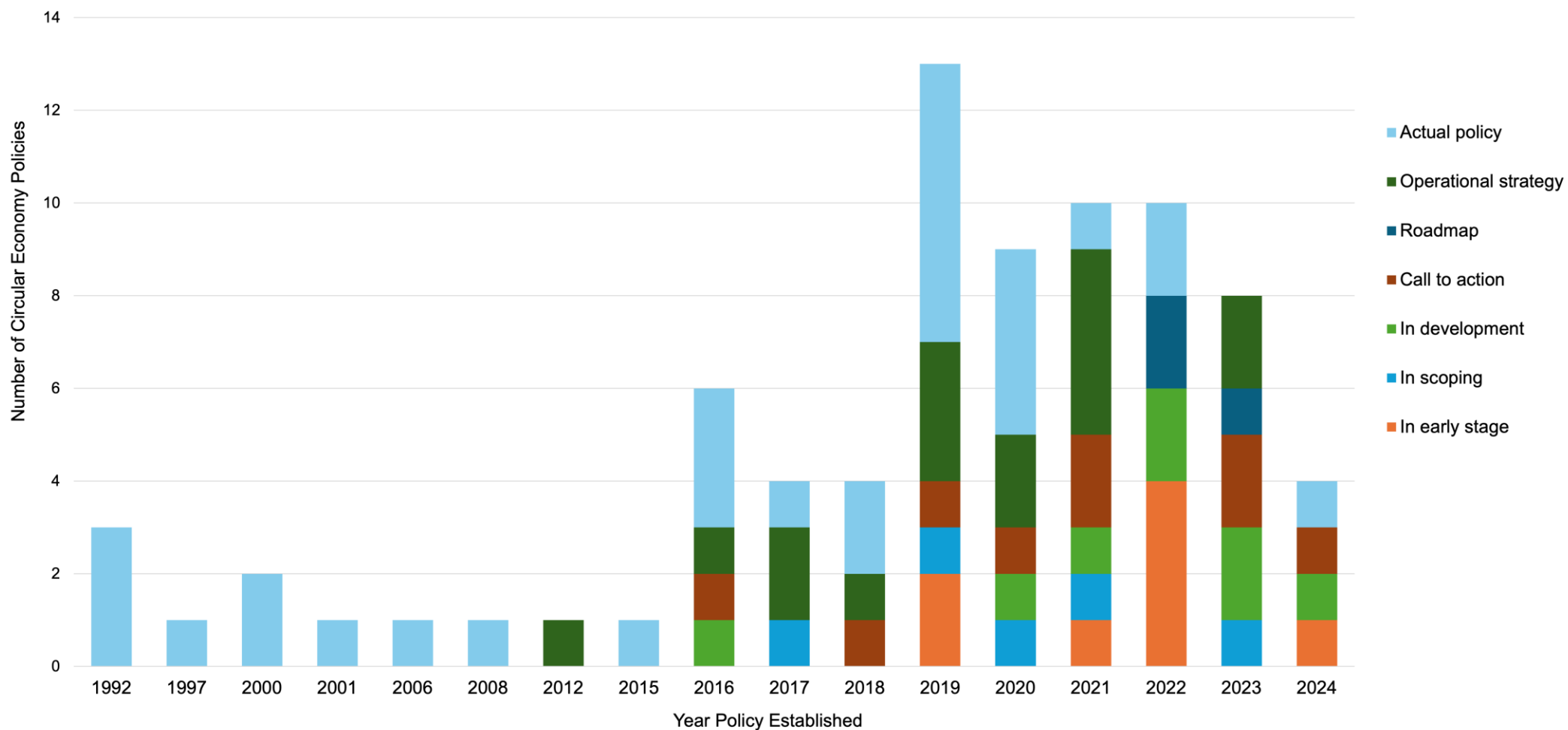
**79** policies from **5** regions of the Asia-Pacific catalogued and ranked in terms of maturity.

**7** major businesses showcased for their leadership in circular economy implementation in food & beverage, real estate, power generation, materials, chemicals, and more.

**6** key drivers of circularity defined with real examples from the Asia-Pacific region.

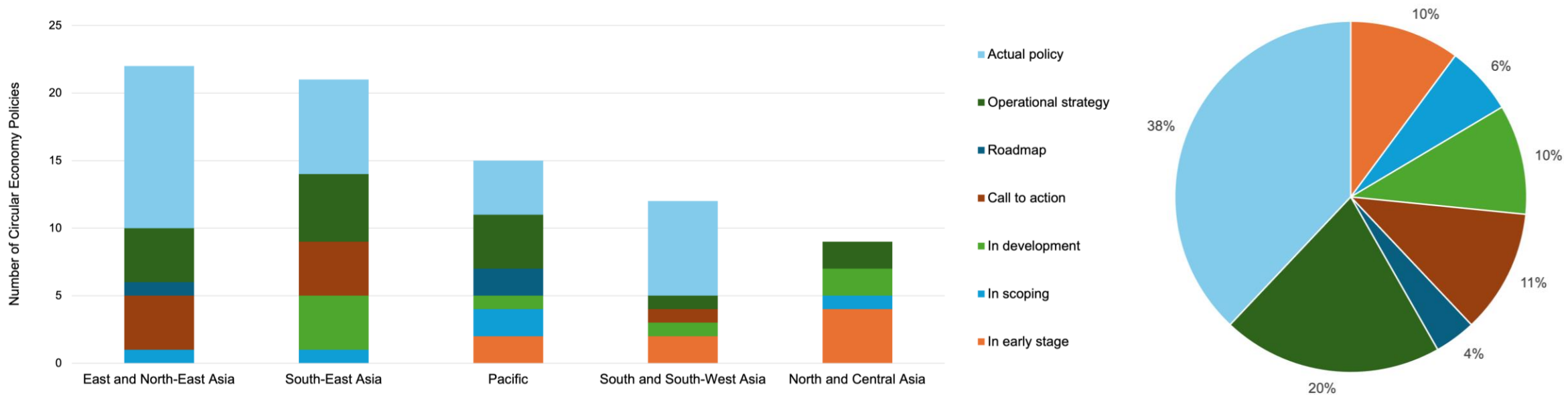
**1** bold vision about what the next frontier of circularity could look like in the Asia-Pacific region.

## Timeline of circular economy policy development in the Asia-Pacific region





## Composition of circular economy policies in the Asia-Pacific region by maturity and geography

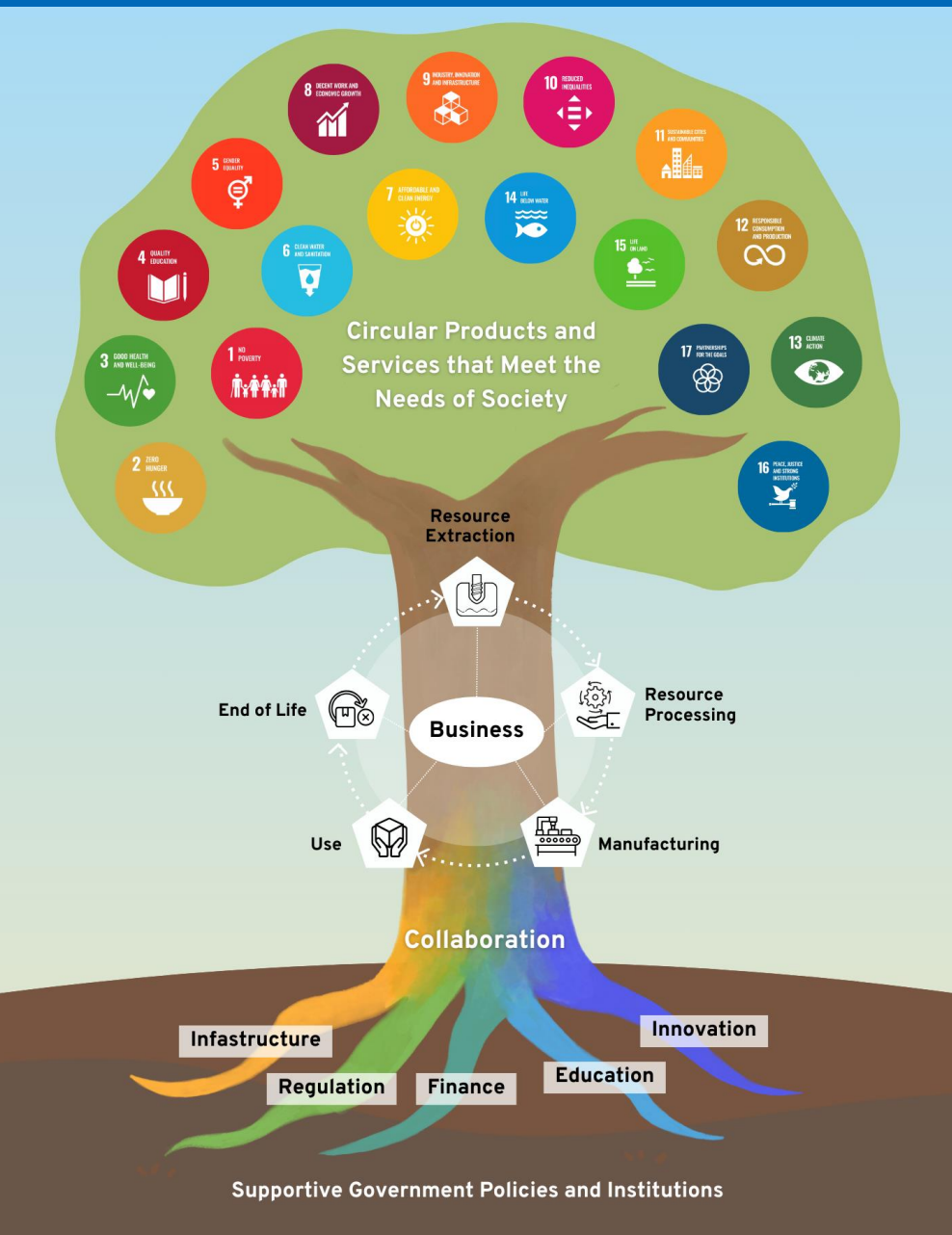


East and North-East Asia has the highest number of policies followed by South-East Asia, the Pacific, South and South-West Asia, and North and Central Asia.

One-third of the 79 policies reviewed have been implemented as enacting laws, regulations, and/or economic or fiscal incentives.

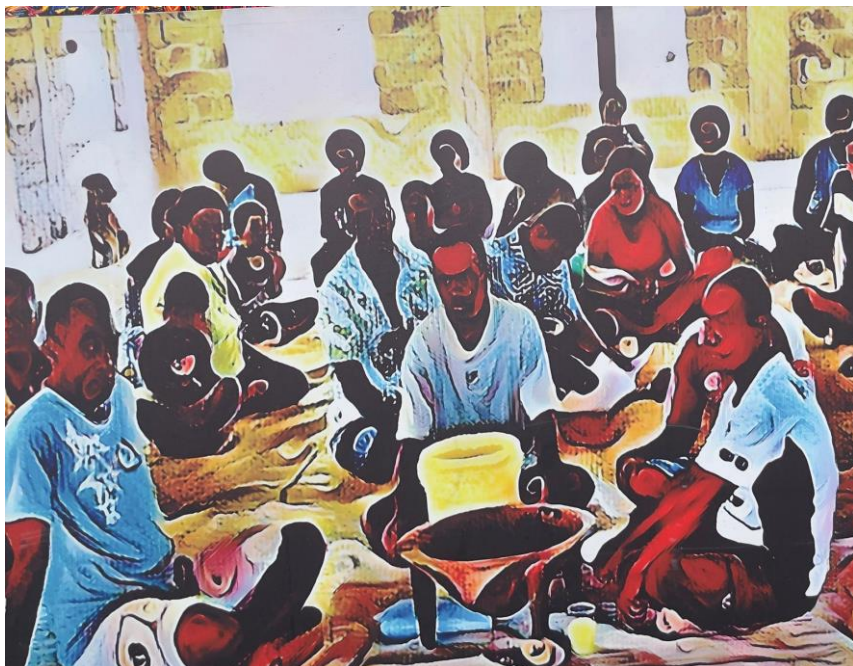
A major barrier confronting the Asia-Pacific region is a lack of concrete policies, particularly those aimed at managing waste.





## How the Six Secrets Unlock Circularity

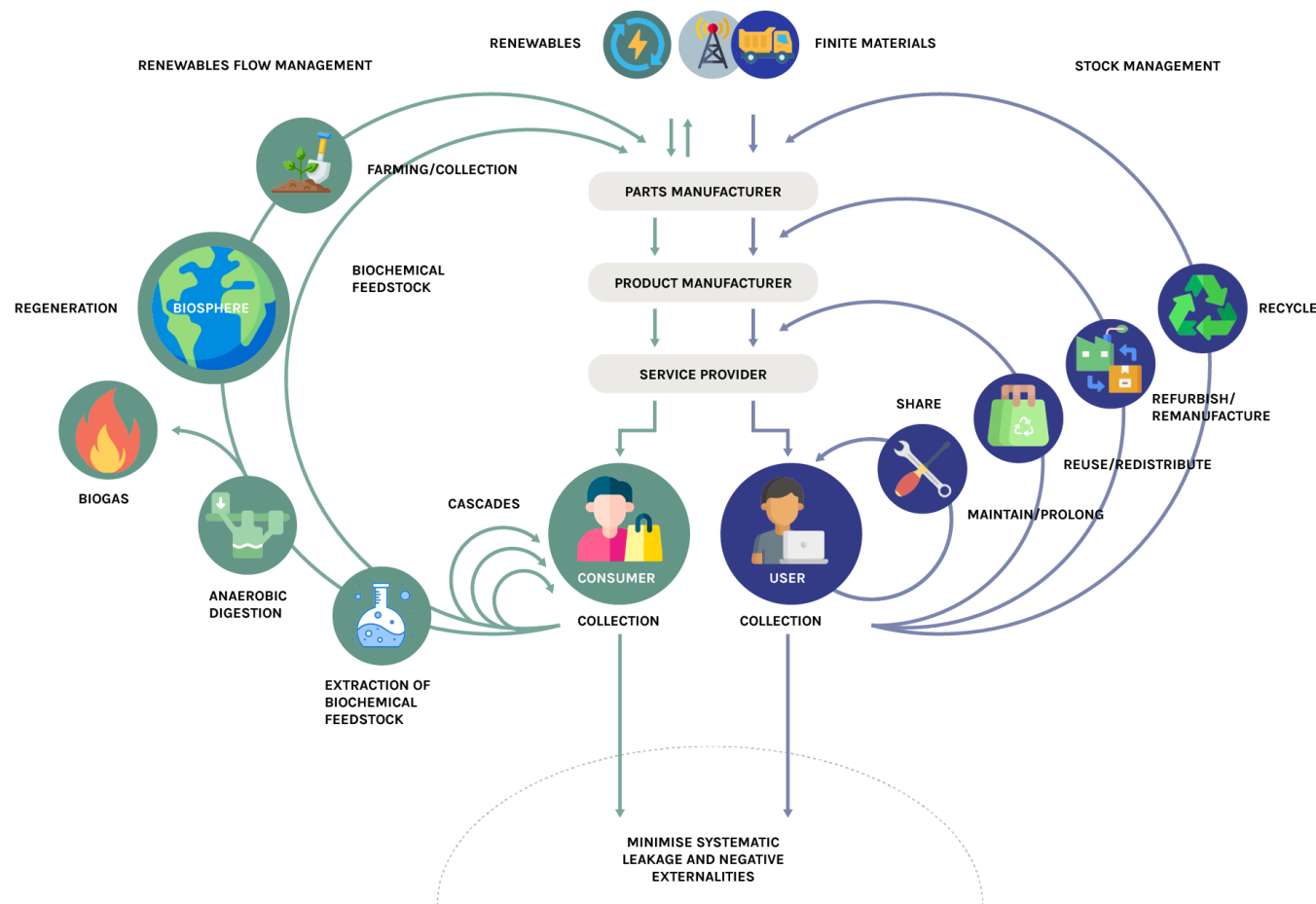
- **Businesses are a collective engine** that can provide circular products and services to meet the needs of society.
- **Achieve circularity** requires businesses to take a life cycle approach in planning the necessary interventions from resource extraction all the way to end-of-life.
- **Establishing** infrastructure, regulation, education, finance, innovation, and collaboration between all actors is the secret to strengthening the ability for companies to implement circular activities at different parts of the life cycle of goods and services.
- **The drivers of circularity** are analogous to the roots of a tree that draw in support from government policies and institutions.
- **Final circular products and services** from businesses can support in achieving the SDGs.



3

## **Role of the Private sector: ESBN Platform to advance Circular Economy**





## Going from Interest to ACTION

### High Global Interest

Dialogues, debates, and public news stories about the circular economy has almost tripled which provides evidence of greater awareness and interest.

### Less Talk, More Action

Speeches and targets announced have not yet been converted into ground-level actions and real impacts.

### Supporting the SDGs

Circularity supports the UN SDGs, particularly:

- SDG9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- SDG12: Responsible Consumption and Production
- SDG13: Climate Action

### Business Leadership

Businesses have already taken the lead in implementing circular activities with and without government support, but more support is needed from governments and consumers.

## Bold Business Leadership in Asia-Pacific

Pushing Circularity With and Without Government Support

### Resource Efficiency

Using recycled materials, reducing energy and water use and waste, recycling waste streams

### Supply Chain Management

Selecting more sustainable suppliers, setting mid-term and long-term environmental targets.

### Business Model and Product Design Innovation

Creating circular economy strategies and internal working groups and committees, using remote control systems, creating circular, designing products for recyclability, increasing number of reusable and refillable products



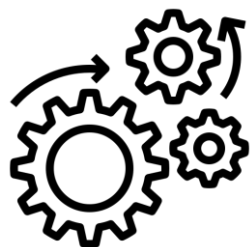
## Key Challenges Faced

Lessons and experiences from the field



### High Initial Investment and Upfront Costs

- Transitioning to circular practices often requires substantial initial investments in new technologies, infrastructure, and training staff to adopt new processes.
- Upfront cost may impose a significant barrier for many businesses, particularly smaller and medium sized firms.



### Supply Chain and Operational Challenges

- Sourcing raw materials from suppliers who follow sustainable standards can complicate supply chain management, logistics and transportation, transparency and traceability and suppliers' capacity.
- Suppliers operate under different environmental regulations and sustainability standards.



### Ambiguity in Definitions and Requirements

- Varying definitions and requirements can create barriers for businesses trying to implement circular initiatives, particularly in global supply chain.
- Lack of standardization can create confusion and difficulty for producers trying to meet multiple sets of requirements.





## Lessons Learned from the Asia-Pacific Region



### Aligning Trade Policies and Circularity Objectives

It is important to align trade policies with circular economy goals to avoid negative spillovers and support global sustainability efforts. Circular economy policies can sometimes unintentionally hinder trade.



### Effective Enforcement of Circular Economy and Waste Management Policies

Without robust implementation of foundational waste management and other environmental laws largely due to limited resources, in-adequate infrastructure, and institutional capacities, efforts to introduce circular economy initiatives may remain inefficient and ineffective.



### Societal Transformation of Consumption Patterns

A significant obstacle is the frequent focus on waste management without equal emphasis on reducing waste at its source.





## Right to Repair

Instrument aims to encourage more sustainable consumption by improving product repair and reuse, both within and outside of the legal warranty.

Implemented in France (Jan 2021) and the United Kingdom (July 2021)

## Production stage taxes

Implemented in the form of taxes on raw materials.

United Kingdom imposes a tax rate of £200 per tonne on packaging that contains less than 30 per cent recycled plastic

## Use stage tax relief

Offered as incentives to repair or reuse products.

Netherlands, Austria, and Sweden impose a reduced VAT rate on repairs for bicycles, shoes, textiles and leather products



1. **National or regional circular economy roadmaps or plans** set certain goals within timelines for achieving circularity.
2. **EPR policies** mandate that manufacturers take responsibility for their products' entire lifecycle, which pushes businesses to design products that are easily recyclable and reusable.
3. **Product design and labelling policies** are critical to supporting circularity because they encourage companies to design products with a sustainability mindset.
4. **Economic incentives** (environmental taxes, subsidies, grants) are fiscal penalties levied that shift companies to design and implement their products that do not harm the environment, encouraging them to develop sustainable alternatives and practices.
5. **Green public procurement policies** can help create markets for circularity products and encourage businesses to produce and provide circularity products or services that meet government demand.





**ESCAP**

Economic and Social Commission  
for Asia and the Pacific

**Way forward:**

**The Next Frontier for Circularity  
in the Asia-Pacific Region**



ESBN Platform

## Multi-level Private Sector Engagement



### Global forums

(COP, HLPPF, GA-Climate week, FFD)

### Regional platforms

(APFSD, CS, COM and Ministerial, CE Forum)

### Subregional engagements

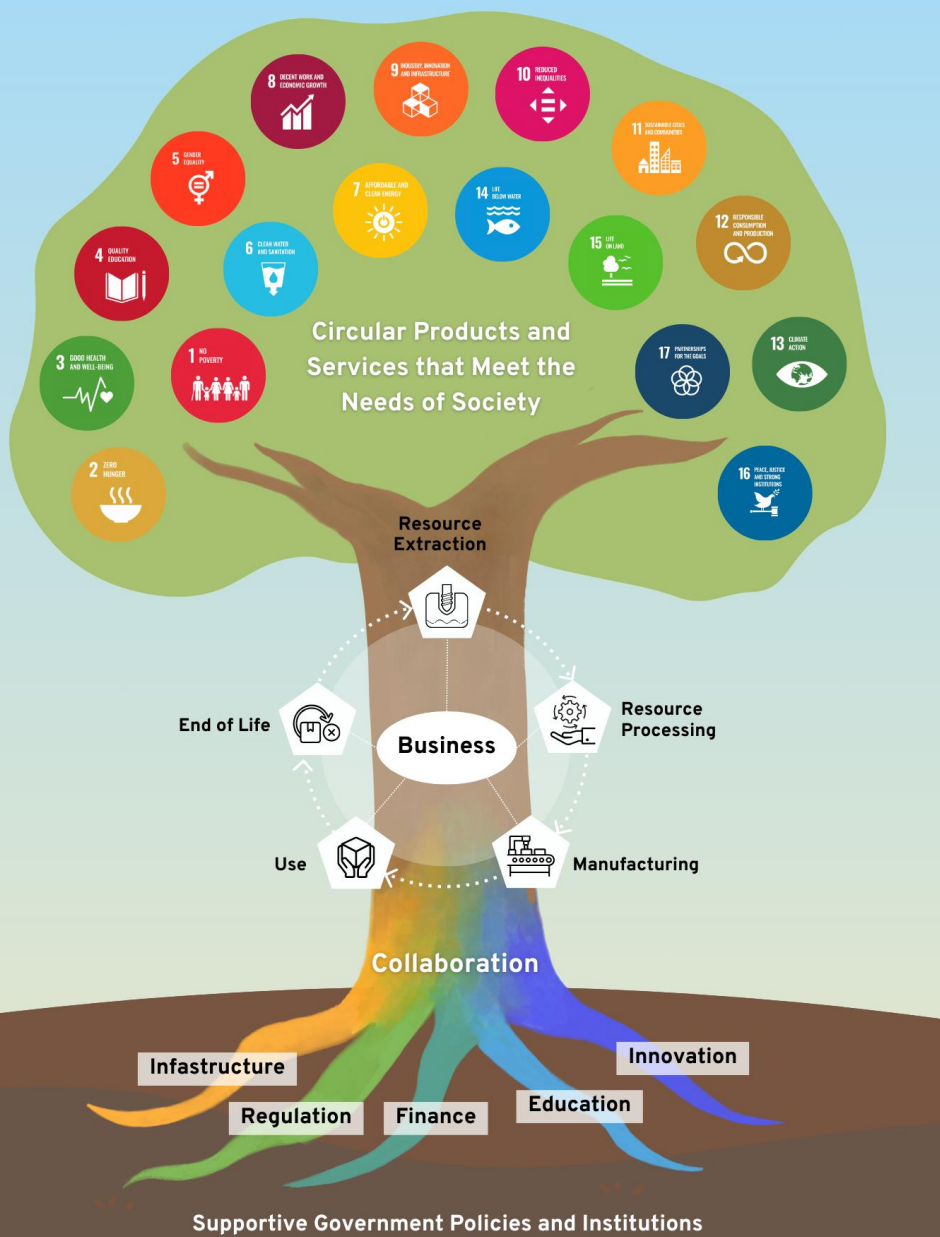
(Policy Dialogues- ASEAN, ECO, SPECA, SPREP)

### National processes

(Sustainability Events)

ESCAP engages private sector, through ESNB, to drive their sustainability initiatives to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

These engagements cut-across all different layers of governance mechanisms **national, subregional, regional and global levels**



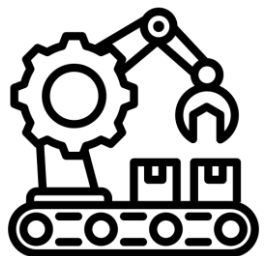
Driver	The Necessary Future State
Infrastructure	Physical and digital infrastructure is established to facilitate waste prevention and product reuse, and treatment of valuable waste streams.
Regulation	Countries across the Asia-Pacific region have implemented regulations that promote circular practices and regulations are well-enforced.
Education	The principles of the circular economy have become a fundamental component of national education systems and workforce training across generations of the population.
Finance	Governments create market conditions and provide public sources of financing that stimulate private investment in circular economy activities that offer both financial and development returns.
Innovation	Products and services that support the circular flow of materials and energy and regenerate nature are deployed and adopted.
Collaboration	All stakeholders across industries and the supply chain in both the public and private sectors share a common goal of scaling up circularity and establish partnerships with tangible outcomes.

## Call to Action



### What Can Governments Do?

- Create a level policy playing field
- Adjust the economics in favor of circularity
- Improve enforcement of regulations
- Support circular activities that are higher in the waste hierarchy (reduce and repair)



### What Can Businesses Do?

- Undertake a systemic diagnostic and create a strategy with buy-in from top management
- Establish company steering committee forums
- Learn from successful cases and replicate



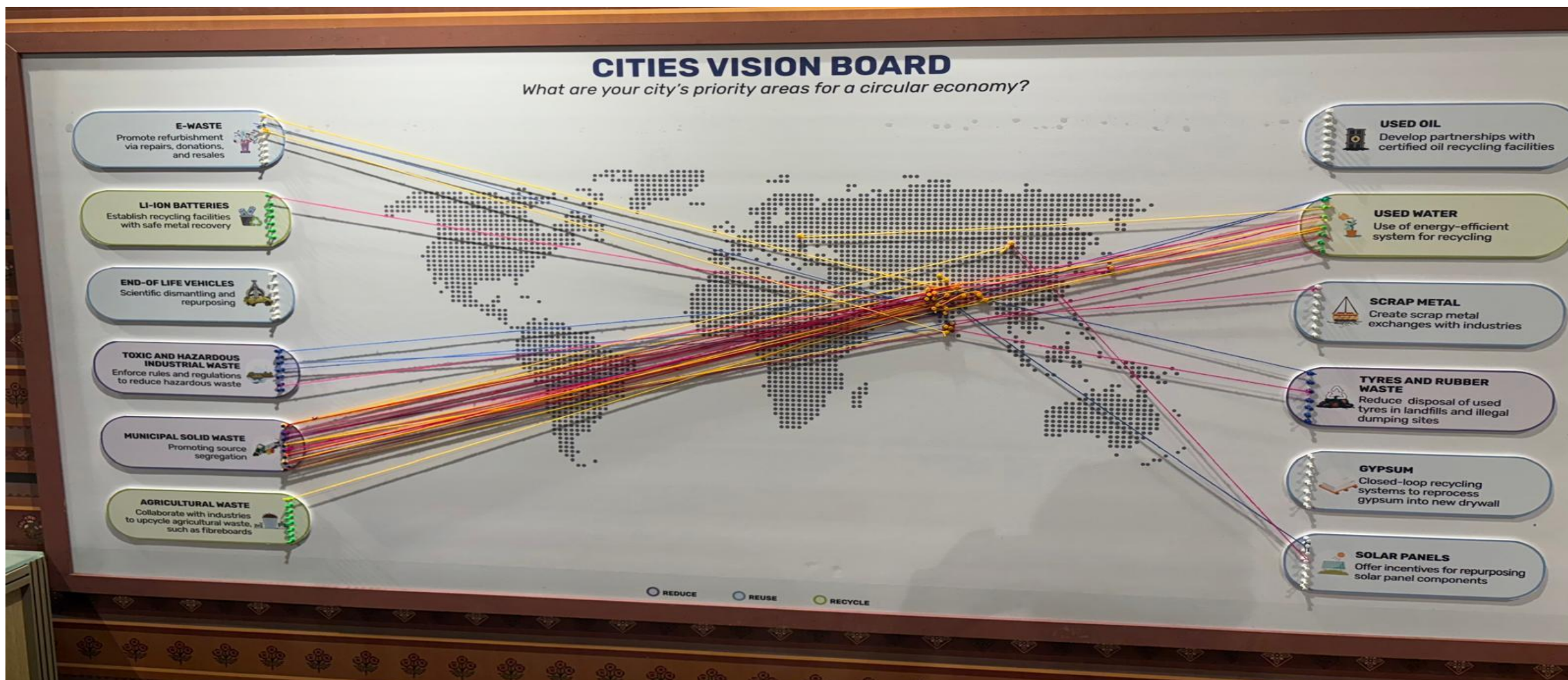
### What Can the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network (ESBN) Do?

- Promote circular economy activities among similar business types
- Engage governments collectively to advocate for action and change
- Create an online library of circular economy success stories and solutions from the Asia-Pacific region
- Collect and communicate the not-so-successful circularity stories

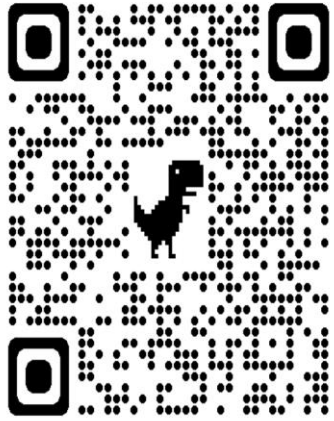




# Annexes







Asia-Pacific Business Forum ESCAP Sustainable Business Network

*"Advance sustainability...  
through peer inspiration,  
policy advocacy and  
collective engagement"*

## **Annex 1: How to join ESNB?**

Membership is open to businesses, private sector representative organizations (such as Chambers of Commerce), or other entities working with business on sustainability issues in Asia and the Pacific.

Prospective members should be based in or have substantial operations in ESCAP member States.

Additionally:

- be a signatory to and adhere to the principles of the UN Global Compact (for business and organizations),
- the UN Principles for Responsible Investment (for investors),
- the Principles for Responsible Banking (for banks),
- or equivalent recognized standards for socially and environmentally responsible business.

Full details in the ESNB Terms of Reference.

Commitment form is available at:  
<https://www.unescap.org/esbn>



# ESCAP Sustainable Business Network (ESBN)

Scale up business ambitions  
and drive private sector in  
working towards the 2030  
Agenda for Sustainable  
Development.

Create a public-private sector  
regional dialogue and  
networking platform to  
advance sustainability  
across all aspects of  
corporate operations

## Annex 2: *ESBN Leadership*

### Executive Council

#### Chairperson

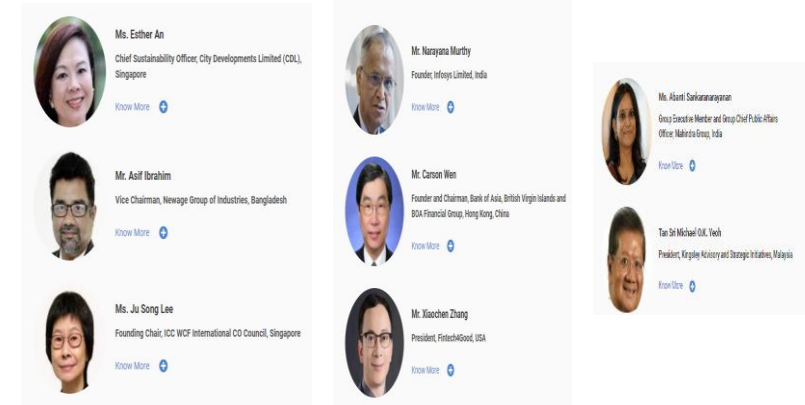


Dr. George Lam,  
President, Hong  
Kong–ASEAN  
Economic  
Cooperation  
Foundation

#### Vice Chairperson



Ms. Shinta Widjaja Kamdani,  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Sintesa Group, Indonesia



### Task Force Chairs



Mr. David  
Simmonds,  
CLP

Energy



Dr. Jacob Kam,  
MTR

Infrastructure



Ms. Poman Lo,  
Regal Hotels

Finance



Mr. Spencer  
Low, Google

Innovation



Dr. Anthony  
Watanabe,  
Indorama

Circular economy

## Annex 3: Calendar of 2025 Engagements

2025 Asia-Pacific Business Forum  
(9-11 April, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)



Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) (25-28 February 2025, Bangkok)

High-Level 12th Regional 3R and Circular Economy Forum in Asia and the Pacific (3-5 March 2025, Jaipur City, Rajasthan, India)

The eighty-first session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific ( 21-25 April 2025, Bangkok)

Committee on Trade, Investment, Enterprise and Business Innovation, Second session (28-30 May 2025, Bangkok)

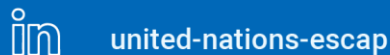
The 4th International Conference on Financing for Development (30 June – 3 July, 2025, Seville, Spain)

2025 UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 30), 10–21 November 2025, Belém, Brazil



# Thank you

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