



ANNUAL CONFERENCE

9th – 10th October 2023
Jakarta, Indonesia



Steering
Committee
Meeting

Annual Meeting



Grant Projects
Meeting

Scaling from SCP
projects to a circular
economy transition

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction	4
1.1 Background	4
1.2 Agenda and Event Objectives	5
2. PART I: SWITCH-Asia Steering Committee Meeting	7
2.1 Opening Session	7
2.2 Session 1: SWITCH-Asia Programme: Policy Support and Grants Implementation: Impacts and Synergies	8
3. PART II: Open Discussion on SWITCH-Asia Programme Impact and Future Directions	13
4. PART III: Meeting of SWITCH-Asia Grant Projects	15
5. PART IV: Annual Conference	18
5.1 Opening Session	18
5.2 Session 1: SCP Technical Advisories (TAs) in Action: Regional Engagements and Global Ambitions.....	18
5.2.1 Breakout 1: Plastics.....	20
5.2.2 Breakout 2: SCP Investments and Market Transformation	20
5.2.3 Breakout 3: Green Public Procurement	21
5.2.4 Breakout 4: Circular Economy Knowledge Hubs and Stakeholder Platforms: Advancing Regional Knowledge and Experiences	22
5.2.5 Breakout 5: Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP)-linked Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC).....	24
Key Takeaways:.....	24
5.3 Session 2: Regional Priorities	25
5.3.1 Breakout 1: Central Asia.....	25
5.3.2 Breakout 2: South Asia	26
5.3.3 Breakout 3: Southeast Asia, Mongolia, and China.....	27
5.3.4 Breakout 4: The Pacific.....	28
5.4 Session 3: Thematic Priorities	29
5.4.1 Roundtable 1: Agri-food.....	29
5.4.2 Roundtable 2: Building and Construction.....	30
5.4.3 Roundtable 3: Resource Use and Climate Change: Innovations for the transition towards Resource Efficient Low-Carbon Economies	31
6. Final Reflections and Concluding Remarks	33
Social Photos	35

Annex A. [Conference Agenda](#)

Annex B. [Event Web Page](#)

Annex C. *[List of Participants]*

Annex D. [Press Release](#)

Annex E. [Presentations](#)

1. INTRODUCTION



On 9-10 October 2023, the SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component organised the 5th SWITCH-Asia Annual Meeting at Le Méridien Hotel, Jakarta. This meeting, comprising the gathering of the Programme Steering Committee (PSC), the Meeting of Grant Projects, and SWITCH-Asia Annual Conference, was the first hybrid meeting since its launch in January 2023. Participants in the event included DG INTPA HQ, EU Delegations, SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component, representatives of EU Member States, National Focal Points of countries eligible for the program, representatives of the SWITCH-Asia Grant Projects, program stakeholders, and regional and international organizations. This report details the key issues raised during this event.

1.1 Background

Rapid economic growth in Asia has lifted many countries out of poverty, but it has led to increased use of natural resources, growing greenhouse gas emissions, and more waste. Achieving sustainability now requires fundamental changes in business practices and consumption patterns. Circular Economy (CE) and Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) aim to improve environmental performance, stimulate demand for better products, and guide consumers toward informed choices. The European Union is committed to addressing these challenges, and the SWITCH-Asia program, launched in 2007, has made significant progress in promoting SCP across 42 countries in the region.

The program consists of two components:

- **The Policy Support Component (PSC)** - managed by the EU Directorate General International Partnerships (DG INTPA). PSC's activities are implemented by GOPA Worldwide Consultants and NIRAS.
- **The Grant Component** - directly managed by the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA).

1.2 Agenda and Event Objectives

The Annual Event was planned to combine and align several objectives. It was divided into four distinct parts, which were targeted to meet defined objectives of specific stakeholder groups. The most important stakeholder groups were identified as:

1. EU Delegations
2. National Focal Points
3. Grant implementing organisations
4. Partner organisations
5. External stakeholders and a wider audience

The objectives of each part were as follows:

PART I: SWITCH-Asia Steering Committee Meeting

Hosted by: SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component

Participants: EU Delegations, National focal points, selected observers

Date and time: 9 October 2023 (morning)

Objectives:

- ✓ To present the overall framework of SWITCH-Asia operations and its current stage of implementation, including ongoing technical assistance.
- ✓ Discuss synergies and added value, relevance of the Programme to policy dialogues in the region (both nationally and across borders), and the priorities under the European Green Deal.
- ✓ Lessons learned and improvements on government and EU Delegations' engagement in activities and communication outreach.

PART II: Internal Meeting of EUD Delegations (closed door)

Hosted by: EU SWITCH-Asia Programme Management

Participants: EU Delegations

Date and time: 9 October 2023 (afternoon)

Objectives:

- ✓ Coordination of the SWITCH-Asia Programme, its synergies with Multiannual Indicative Programmes and the Mid-Term Review.

PART III: Meeting of SWITCH-Asia Grant Projects

Hosted by: EU SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component

Participants: SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component (PSC), representatives of the technical advisory projects

Date and time: 9 October 2023 (morning, in parallel to PART II)

Objectives:

- ✔ Understand the most relevant impacts from the grant projects, from the perspective of catalysing and supporting a genuine circular economy transition in the region, including drivers of success and their replication.
- ✔ Draw lessons, learning from results and experiences of mobilising human, financial, and other resources, and government and stakeholders' commitment and action towards scaling up and sustaining grant project impacts beyond project boundaries and timelines.
- ✔ Identify possible levers for scaled-up and sustained project impacts, that can be mainstreamed across current and future grant projects for a more transformative impact of the SWITCH-Asia programme.

PART IV: Annual Conference

Hosted by: EU SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component

Participants: EU Delegations

Date and time: 9 October 2023 (afternoon)

Objectives:

- ✔ Exchange ideas and share insights on developing and mainstreaming SCP and circular economy practices, including through existing regional knowledge hubs, targeted communication efforts, and engagement of key stakeholders.
- ✔ To promote the co-creation of innovative SCP solutions and to strengthen mutual learning between grant projects and policy advisory, optimizing the overall efficacy, reach, and sustainability of SCP initiatives under the PSC umbrella.
- ✔ To offer the stakeholders of the Programme an opportunity to discuss, plan and innovate together towards joint multi-country SCP initiatives in the framework of the PSC.
- ✔ To facilitate the development of ideas for future technical assistance of the SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component (PSC).

2. PART I: SWITCH-ASIA STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

2.1 Opening Session



In the opening session, **H.E. Mr. Sujiro SEAM**, the **EU Ambassador to ASEAN**, addressed global expansion efforts, emphasizing the need for introspection and forward planning. This moment marked the initial phase of expanding to the Pacific and the Middle East, expressing optimism about the prospects.



Mr. SEAM praised Jakarta as a fitting venue for this event, considering Indonesia's role as the chair of ASEAN, often viewed as the second most successful regional integration project globally, with the European Union being the foremost example. He mentioned a recent prosperous ASEAN summit in Jakarta, marked by a strong emphasis on growth, a critical component of the post-COVID recovery era. Projects related to green public procurement, building codes, plastics, tourism, and rice production were highlighted. Sustainable consumption and production of rice hold great importance in this region.

While acknowledging progress in these challenging times, Mr. SEAM urged the audience to look ahead. The expansion of SWITCH-Asia, not only geographically but also into the Pacific and the Middle East, presents an important challenge. He encouraged a regional approach to maximize knowledge sharing and capacity building. The European Union's Global Gateway initiative was highlighted, with a call for SWITCH-Asia to contribute and benefit from this effort. Collaboration with stakeholders, including the private sector, was stressed as essential for real-world impact.

Mr. SEAM concluded with a call for open dialogue, innovation, and the pursuit of solutions that may not have been considered yet. The audience was encouraged to openly share challenges and complexity for better cooperation and adaptation to specific needs.

Mr. Guy JANAWAY, **SWITCH-Asia Programme Coordinator, Directorate General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), European Commission**, expressed his excitement about being present at the SWITCH-Asia conference in Indonesia and highlighted the importance of input from various ministries in Asia and the Pacific countries, and National Focal Points in EU delegations worldwide.

2.2 Session 1: SWITCH-Asia Programme: Policy Support and Grants Implementation: Impacts and Synergies

Presentation of the SWITCH-Asia Framework



Dr. Zinaida Fadeeva, Team Leader of the SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component, extended a warm welcome to the participants and provided an overview of the new phase of the SWITCH-Asia Programme. This phase encompasses strategic objectives, key activities, and effective utilization of communication channels and social media to enhance the visibility of the Programme initiatives.

Commencing in 2007, SWITCH-Asia today is a regional programme covering 42 countries. The programme strategically establishes connections with diverse ministries through national focal points, with a primary focus on promoting low-carbon development, resource efficiency, and circular economy practices across sectors such as food, textiles, tourism, plastics, and buildings. Aligned with the goals of the EU Green Deal, the commitment involves staying up to date with new developments in Europe to effectively communicate them to regional partners. The Programme's emphasis is on strengthening support for policy development, including industrial policies, and fostering stronger engagement with the private sector.

SWITCH-Asia comprises two components: the grant scheme and the policy support component. Grant schemes are instrumental in piloting sustainable consumption and production activities among small businesses and consumer organisations. Concurrently, the policy support component aims to establish a comprehensive framework for institutional actions, facilitating the incorporation of lessons learned from grants. Currently, the region hosts 33 active grant projects, seven of which have recently concluded. Six Impact sheets detailing grant results are available online for completed projects.

Presently, a development in the grant initiatives is the creation of the [Orientation video series](#). Designed as instructional material for prospective grant applicants, the series serves as an initial step in effectively communicating the essence of sustainable consumption and production. This series, now available on the [SWITCH-Asia website](#), uniquely features the voices of past grant recipients, offering valuable insights to future applicants on crafting impactful, interesting, ambitious, and resource-efficient projects.

The Policy Support Component, newly implemented this year, emphasizes a multi-country regional approach, diverging from the previous stage. The objectives include continuous support for policy frameworks, aiming to mainstream and upscale SCP and circular economy activities. This involves a heightened focus on integrating resource and climate issues, particularly through the integration of SCP and NDC targets. Additionally, the Programme is committed to fostering robust dialogues between Europe, Asia, and the Pacific. The recent launch of eight technical advisories illustrates the Programme's commitment.



Dr. Sara GABAI, Communication and Partnerships Expert of SWITCH-Asia PSC, joined the stage to report on the Communication's performance of the programme. She presented the Communication Strategy for 2023-2026, focusing on three main pillars, namely: recognition and visibility, engagement and behaviour change, and partnerships and collaborations. With over 28,000 website users and 80,000 page views, the programme aims to raise awareness of the external dimension of EU policies and priorities and their relevance in Asia/SDG12 contribution/NDCs; increase audiences' knowledge and understanding of the benefits offered by SCP in the region; and build synergies and strategic partnerships to support SCP implementation at regional and national levels. Social media milestones from 2020 until the present were also presented, celebrating this year the programme's reach of more than 500,000 Facebook Followers. Moreover, the rebranded and upgraded website was presented, as well as the programme's new visibility guidelines.

Dr. Zinaida FADEEVA presented an overview of SWITCH-Asia's forthcoming technical advisory plans in the short and medium durations. In the short term, the technical advisory planning encompasses activities in the building and construction sector, Hindu Kush Himalayan SCP & Circular Economy Support, and the Agri-food sector. Meanwhile, the medium-term technical advisory planning involves initiatives related to the textile and garments industry, extended producer responsibility (EPR), industrial ecology policy, and the follow-up on the operationalization of existing SCP policies.

In the realm of plastic, a technical advisory on **Plastics Governance Engagement** is currently ongoing, with a focus on fostering a common understanding aligned with the objectives of the global agreement on plastic. This ongoing dialogue is at the forefront of government requests. The SWITCH-Asia Programme experts actively engage with countries identified as having strong potential for involvement or those already connected with our experts through previous rounds of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) 2. The resulting knowledge products are in the finalization stage, presenting intermediate results for the High Ambition Coalition. SWITCH-Asia support extends into the INC3 meeting, set to occur in Nairobi, ensuring continued assistance throughout the process (see knowledge products [here](#)).

The technical assistance on **Finance and Investment** is primarily directed towards comprehending the dynamics of finance, infrastructure, and collaboration among financial entities involved in funding SCP initiatives of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) across various countries. The current focus involves detailed analytical work in three specific countries: Lao PDR, Pakistan, and the Philippines. This phase entails an in-depth analysis, essentially a 'landscaping' process, aimed at determining the extent and nature of SCP financing. The ongoing stage involves mapping financial sector actors, with an agreed-upon draft structure for the upcoming report. Interviews with specific financial institutions in these countries are either underway or set to commence shortly.



Mr. Ranga PALLAWALA, Key Expert, SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component, presented on the technical advisory concerning **SCP and Climate Change**. The TA aims to scientifically integrate these two critical domains, exploring overlaps and core benefits. Implemented in Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, the TA seeks to learn from countries that have integrated SCP aspects into their National Determined Contributions (NDCs). Objectives include capturing lessons learned and analysing potential areas for SCP integration in climate action and upcoming NDC enhancements in 2025. The status involves mapping SCP priorities and engaging stakeholders, with webinars planned to understand the nexus between SCP, Circular Economy and Climate Change (watch the recording of the first webinar [here](#)). SWITCH-Asia PSC work will also provide additional information to the countries in the region to strengthen their climate actions and ambitions, including NDCs, by capitalizing on the SCP/CE potentials.



Ms. Loraine GATLABAYAN, Key Expert on SCP Awareness Raising and Regional Partnership Building within the SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component, presented a technical advisory on **SCP policies and actions in the Pacific** (find the advisory brief [here](#)). Given SWITCH-Asia's new presence in the region, understanding the needs and priorities of Pacific countries is crucial. The technical assistance aims to establish a dialogue platform through ongoing briefings with national focal points and EU delegations in the 15 Pacific countries. It emphasizes multi-stakeholder consultations and collaboration with partner organisations. An engagement strategy paper is in development, outlining key actions for Pacific countries' involvement. Currently, ongoing briefings and mapping activities are in progress, with stakeholder engagement strategies expected to facilitate informed discussions in upcoming regional sessions and consultations.

The TA on **(Re)Launch of the ASEAN SCP Framework** was initiated in response to a request from the Government of Indonesia. Developed with prior support from SWITCH-Asia, the framework was officially adopted in 2021. However, its implementation currently prioritises sustainable lifestyles and education, with other goals, including monitoring sustainable food systems and green public procurement, temporarily on hold. The delay is attributed to ongoing decisions on leadership for implementation within the ASEAN Secretariat and the involvement of ASEAN Member States. The Policy Support Component is actively developing a proposal for the implementation of sustainable lifestyles and education.

The TA on **Mobilizing Business Action for Circular Economy in ASEAN** is in partnership with the ASEAN CSR Network, focusing on fostering a Circular Economy in ASEAN (brief can be found [here](#)). The initiative aims to garner business commitments toward circular economy practices. The TA is currently in the stage of facilitating a shared understanding of circular economy importance in ASEAN, conducting fact-finding, analysing, and drawing lessons from circular economy business experiences. Business cases will be prepared, and engagement with the business sector to encourage circular economy commitments is planned. The focus is on Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam, with country-level workshops scheduled until November, including a side event during the SWITCH-Asia annual event in Jakarta on 12 October 2023. Subsequent workshops have been held in Cambodia, Bangkok, the Philippines, and Vietnam. The launch of a [call for business examples](#) in ASEAN has been announced on social media channels (Facebook, X, LinkedIn). The deadline for submission is on 31 December 2023. Businesses showcasing exemplary circular economy practices are encouraged to submit. Winners will receive high visibility on various channels and thorough analysis by our expert team.



Ms. Elodie MARIA-SUBE, Key Expert on EU policy development and partnership building, SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component, presented the technical advisory (see brief [here](#)) on green public procurement (GPP). Addressing the challenge of aligning GPP with sustainable consumption and production, the TA aims to bridge the gap between environmental specialists and public finance experts. Currently active in Cambodia, Malaysia, Bangladesh, and Vietnam, the TA conducts rapid appraisals and engages with government officials. The goal is to elevate GPP, leveraging governments as influential buyers for transformation. Coordination with EU delegations and exploration of collaboration with other programs are underway, with plans to expand the initiative to Uzbekistan.

Dr. Sara GABAI presented the support that is currently being provided to the [ASEAN Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform \(ACESP\)](#), hosted by the ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue (ACSDSD). This Platform is part of the EU-ASEAN Partnership on Circular Economy, endorsed by the ASEAN Senior Officials on the Environment (ASOEN) in 2018. It is partly supported by the Enhanced EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument (E-READI), a cooperation programme facilitating dialogues between the EU and ASEAN. The aim of this TA is, on one hand, to strengthen the online presence, outreach, and knowledge

management of the ASEAN Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform, leading to a more effective knowledge-sharing and dialogue, targeting policymakers, the business community, and civil society in ASEAN. Leveraging partnerships among institutes of higher education in ASEAN that are working on shared priorities (circular economy, SCP, SDGs, sustainability, among others), and promoting cross-pillar and cross-sectoral cooperation and knowledge sharing, SWITCH-Asia will also support The ASEAN Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform with the planning, organisation, and delivery of six webinar sessions focusing on “unpacking” the strategic priorities outlined in the “ASEAN Sustainable Consumption and Production Framework” and the “Framework for Circular Economy for the ASEAN Community”. This will allow ‘translation’ of relevant concepts into realities of ASEAN stakeholders defining their roles as contributions to the implementation of these policies through SCP and CE practices.

Dr. Zinaida FADEEVA subsequently provided updates on upcoming events organised by or supported by the EU SWITCH-Asia programme. Two events in Suwon, South Korea, in October 2023, the 8th Asia Pacific Urban Forum (23-25 Oct) and the Asia-Pacific Housing Forum (26-27 October) organized by Habitat for Humanity were successfully conducted. Additionally, three side events during COP28 will focus on the link between NDCs and SCP. Collaboration with the Central Asian region, Pakistan and Sri Lanka as well as international organisations are anticipated for this event.

3. PART II: OPEN DISCUSSION ON SWITCH-ASIA PROGRAMME IMPACT AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS



An open discussion session took place bringing together EU Delegations, National Focal Points, and the Policy Support Component. Leading the conversation were Mr. Guy JANAWAY and Dr. Zinaida FADEEVA. Guiding questions framed the discussion, allowing participants to get into specific aspects of the SWITCH-Asia Programme, namely their interest in technical advisory (TA) projects, potential areas for exploration through the TA work, enhancing engagements through the programme, with a particular focus on strengthening collaborations with National Focal Points in Ministries.

Another topic of discussion involved exploring the longstanding relationship between the United Nations and countries like India, aiming for mutual benefits in collaborative efforts. While UNEP is not part of the current setup, SWITCH-Asia actively seeks collaboration with UN agencies, including ongoing dialogue with UNDP, especially in new regions like the Pacific.

In the new phase of SWITCH-Asia, a heightened focus on mainstreaming EU policies, particularly those from the Green Deal, was highlighted. SWITCH-Asia actively engages with various Directorate-Generals in Brussels to gather insights on upcoming regulations and assess their impact in Asia.

The discussion then shifted towards the SCP and climate change technical advisory, focusing on the steps or plans following the collection of valuable insights and practices. The importance of continuous learning and adaptation, particularly in supporting NDC enhancement for 2025, was emphasized.

SWITCH-Asia's work on SCP and the circular economy contributing to specific climate change milestones was also discussed. A cautious approach was stressed, focusing on concrete actions to strengthen SCP targets within countries' indices, with tangible results expected by COP 28 sessions.

Regarding the extension of the programme to countries like Yemen, Iraq, and Iran, discussions highlighted early-stage engagement and considerations for activities in Yemen. Ongoing events in Iran were acknowledged, and in Iraq and Yemen, discussions had begun with DG-INTPA colleagues.

For the COP 28 side events, SWITCH-Asia's primary role was emphasized as enhancing the integration of SCP with climate change initiatives. Engagement at COP 28 involves facilitating discussions, with collaborations with partners aiming to synergize SCP aspects with Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

Participants from Bangladesh highlighted the country's active participation in climate negotiations, revising its NDC early, and expressed interest in SWITCH-Asia's focus areas, particularly in plastic pollution and circular economy projects. SWITCH-Asia took note of the comments.

Regarding the TA on Mobilising Business Action for CE in ASEAN, participants discussed the potential synergy between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and SCP. Emphasis was placed on lobbying Member State business bodies and Chambers of Commerce, encouraging collaboration. SWITCH-Asia acknowledged the promising synergy and ongoing technical assistance in engaging the private sector in circular economy matters.

Finally, discussions centred on tailoring assistance for Pacific countries, acknowledging the unique challenges they face. SWITCH-Asia affirmed its commitment to a regional approach, emphasizing tailored strategies and collaboration among countries while maintaining in-depth engagement with each.

In conclusion, **key takeaways** highlighted the importance of tailored approaches, regional collaboration, a commitment to long-term impact, and continuous learning within the SWITCH-Asia programme. These aspects underscored the programme's dedication to addressing specific challenges and ensuring sustainability and continuous improvement.

4. PART III: MEETING OF SWITCH-ASIA GRANT PROJECTS

Introduction and Welcome

The session convened representatives from 39 grant projects, associated partners, and experts involved in the execution of ongoing and planned Technical Advisories (TAs) under the Policy Support Component (PSC). **Mr. Guy JANAWAY, SWITCH-Asia Programme Coordinator, DG-INTPA** and **Dr. Zinaida FADEEVA, SWITCH-Asia PSC, Team Leader** delivered brief welcoming remarks. They clarified that this grant projects' session had been added to this 5th Annual Networking Conference at the explicit request of representatives of grant projects who participated in earlier annual events. Hence, the session has been designed to discuss common opportunities and challenges for sustaining, mainstreaming, and scaling up projects, with the input and overall moderation of **Dr. Rene VAN BERKEL** and **Dr. Arab HOBALLAH** serving as Senior Experts for the SWITCH-Asia PSC.



From SCP Projects to a Circular Economy Transition

As background for the discussions, **Dr. Rene VAN BERKEL, Senior Expert on Circular Economy for SWITCH-Asia PSC**, elucidated on the session's theme, i.e., scaling from Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) projects to a Circular Economy (CE) transition. He reflected that the relevant green agenda has progressed over time from SCP, through the green economy, growth, and industry, to CE, with the latter increasingly viewed as society's best bet to address the triple planetary crises of climate change, loss of nature and biodiversity, and accumulation of waste and pollution. CE goes beyond a recycling or 3R economy. The SWITCH-Asia PSC, in consultation with the grant projects, assessed each ongoing grant project on four circular economy dimensions (circular strategies, innovation, life cycle stages, and enablers) as well as contributions to specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Two-thirds of grant projects address resource efficiency, about one-third addresses resource circularity and resource substitution. Interventions primarily target the production stage, and over 90% of grant projects include training and capacity building as an enabler, with 60% also targeting market transformation, and one-third supporting policy change. Grant projects have achieved commendable SCP activities and outcomes (training, assessments, policy advisory, etc.). Yet, considering the urgency of environmental pollution and climate change, the paramount societal challenge is to achieve more (SCP activities and outcomes) with (pro rata) fewer resources (particularly grants and public funding) for more (CE impact in terms of efficient and circular resource use). This necessitates the creation of incentives (or disincentives) through policy, markets, and behaviour, and truly scalable intervention strategies and tools.

Experience Sharing from Grant Projects



Representatives of five grant projects spoke briefly on their respective project's key achievements and experiences with sustaining and upscaling their project achievements. **Mr. Denis SCHAEFER, Prevent Plastics Myanmar**, discussed scaling up environmentally conscious behaviours through schools practicing plastics avoidance, waste composting, and school gardening. **Mr. Peter RICHARDS, TOURLINK Thailand**, emphasized the importance of locally appropriate sustainable tourism standards and the establishment of affordable accreditation services. **Mr. Mahfuzur RAHMAN, Switch Garment Cambodia**, highlighted the need to train and use local auditors to reduce assessment costs for enterprises, create public-private partnerships, and facilitate policy development and implementation. **Mr. Sanubabu DANGOL, Building Energy Efficiency Project in Nepal (BEEN)**, elaborated on the necessity of partnerships, including with financial institutions, to scale up the project's main innovation, i.e., the use of hollow bricks for materials and energy conservation. **Ms. Melody MELO RIJK, Mindoro Strait Sustainable and Equitable Tuna for Bankability (MS-SETB) project in the Philippines** emphasized the importance of working with fishing and coastal communities to create livelihoods that avoid the need to overfish. A common concern in the respective interventions was the tension between relatively short project duration (3-4 years) and the long gestation period for sustaining and scaling up project activities and impacts.

Roundtable Discussion by Sector

Five parallel sectorial roundtable discussions took place to take stock of key project impacts, review sustainability and scaling up achievements, and consolidate potential levers for increased grant project impacts. The roundtables covered: tourism (facilitated by Peter Richards); plastics and waste management (facilitated by Denis Schaefer); textile, leather, and garments (facilitated by Mr Mahfuzur RAHMAN); building and construction (facilitated by Mr Sanubabu DANGOL); and agri-food (facilitated by Ms Melody MELO RIJK).

*The combined discussions on **scaling up mechanisms** were summarised by Ms MELO RIJK in the following categories:*

- Build upon and strengthen local (and/or national) knowledge, traditions, and human resources, such as local food habits and preservation practices and indigenous means and ways of living to increase project acceptance, impact, and sustainability;
- Leveraging – access to – financing and use fiscal instruments (including tax) both at the supply side (producers to adopt sustainable practices) and demand side (consumers to afford sustainable products and services);
- Co-creation and co-implementation of trade and sustainability policies to create supply chains for nature-positive products and services, through e.g., trade agreements, sustainability standards, and traceability tools. These may be further promoted and scaled with green marketing and green public procurement;
- Awareness, education, and capacity development on practical sustainability actions for the direct actors in the fields of construction, farmers and fisherfolks, workers in textile, tourism actors, plastics and waste management implementers; and
- Synergies and learning across projects, to ensure best practices are replicated and promoted and reduce duplication of activities and learning in projects in similar sectors and with comparable objectives.



The combined discussions **on levers for scaled-up project impact** were summarised as follows by Mr Peter RICHARDS:

- Co-design and co-create stakeholders' ecosystem: comprehensive mapping of the ecosystem of stakeholders affecting the target group and the project interventions and invest in the co-creation of alliances and partnerships that can be empowered by and during the project to sustain and upscale project activities and impacts post-project completion;
- Target and optimise EU-Asia policy synergies: early and specific identification of the most relevant policy developments on EU and host country sides, to fine-tune the project's policy interventions and support policy implementation, monitoring, and enforcement;
- Evidence-based project design, monitoring, and up-scaling: projects need to be designed on the basis of the best available and specific country data, to set and monitor KPIs, and track progress towards the aspirational goal of market transformation;
- Access to appropriate financing: ensure 'financing literacy' and entrepreneurial mindset of project management and implementation partners to improve meaningful collaboration and engagement of financial institutions in market transformation; and
- Active knowledge management: improve the codification of achievements, experiences, and lessons learned (including all training, policy, and other resource materials developed in projects) and ensure their effective utilisation in future and parallel grant projects to increase efficiency and impact of grant projects.

5. PART IV: ANNUAL CONFERENCE

5.1 Opening Session

H.E. Mr. Sujiro SEAM, the EU Ambassador to ASEAN, welcomed the participants. Reflecting on the origins of the SWITCH-Asia programme, he highlighted its impact on sustainable development. He emphasised the importance of persistence and individual conviction in driving positive change, acknowledging that not everyone may share the same views. He aligned SWITCH-Asia with the EU's strategic priorities in Asia, particularly focusing on climate change, the green economy, and sustainable consumption. Mr. SEAM encouraged collaboration, referencing the strength in unity and the relevance of teaming up under initiatives like Global Gateway and Team Europe. He concluded by urging attendees to embrace their shared purpose and leverage their collective strength for impactful collaboration in addressing global challenges.

Mr Guy JANAWAY, SWITCH-Asia Program Coordinator, DG-INTPA, expressed gratitude for the opportunity to connect with various stakeholders, highlighting the value of witnessing on-the-ground impacts of projects. He provided insights into the Global Gateway and Team Europe initiatives, emphasising their roles in sustainable global connectivity and cooperation. Moreover, Mr. JANAWAY emphasised the EU Green Deal's importance in addressing climate challenges, stressing the need for a collective approach. He concluded by viewing the conference as an opportunity to collaboratively address environmental, social, and economic challenges for the Asia-Pacific region and the planet.

Dr. Zinaida FADEEVA, Team Leader of SWITCH-Asia PSC introduced SWITCH-Asia and provided an overview of the Annual Conference agenda. **Dr. Sara GABAI, Communication and Partnerships Expert of SWITCH-Asia PSC** joined the stage to report on the Communication's performance of the programme and the active role SWITCH-Asia stakeholders have played in ensuring its success. She presented the Communication Strategy for 2023-2026, focusing on three main pillars: recognition and visibility, engagement and behaviour change, and partnerships and collaborations. She also showcased social media milestones from 2020 until the present and highlighted top-performing grant projects and engaged members from EU Delegations, European Commission, and international, regional, and national organisations.

5.2 Session 1: SCP Technical Advisories (TAs) in Action: Regional Engagements and Global Ambitions



Dr. Zinaida FADEEVA briefly introduced the ongoing technical assistance projects of SWITCH-Asia PSC:

1. Plastics Governance Engagement
2. Finance and Investment
3. SCP and Climate Change
4. Green Public Procurement
5. SCP Policies and Actions in the Pacific
6. (Re)Launch of the ASEAN SCP Framework
7. Mobilising Business Action for Circular Economy in ASEAN
8. ASEAN Circular Economy Knowledge Hub

Five of the eight TAs were presented by the senior experts before going through detailed discussions in the Breakouts.

Mr. Sanjay VASHIST, Senior Expert for SWITCH-Asia PSC TA on SCP and Climate Change addressed the crucial need for energy transition in the era of sustainability. He stressed that comprehensive energy transition requires technological advancements, lifestyle shifts, and behavioural transformations. He also emphasised the importance of aligning the climate agenda with sustainable consumption and production for efficient progress towards sustainable development goals. Mr. VASHIST highlighted challenges in South Asia and opportunities provided by strong political will and identified hooks, such as Sri Lanka's focus on sustainable production.

Dr. Arab HOBALLAH, Senior expert for SWITCH-Asia PSC TA on SCP Policy and Actions in the Pacific mentioned the challenges faced in the Pacific, focusing on the 13 isolated small island developing states. He emphasised the importance of altering consumption patterns, reducing dependence on unhealthy imports, and collaborating with local communities and SMEs. Dr. HOBALLAH discussed the proposal for Talanoa dialogues to foster open discussions showcasing the transformative potential of sustainable consumption and production.

Mr. Sanjay KUMAR, Senior Expert for SWITCH-Asia PSC TA on Green Public Procurement referred to the focus on scaling SWITCH-Asia supported projects for lasting impact beyond their life cycle. He discussed the leverage for systematic and transformative change lying in green public procurement (GPP). He furthermore highlighted the significant role of governments as major buyers, consumers, and contributors to emissions, stressing the importance of GPP across sectors.

Mr. Sanjoy SANYAL, Senior expert for SWITCH-Asia PSC TA on Financing and Investment discussed a financing project focused on linking financial institutions with SCP and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). He explored existing projects in three countries and provided insights into facilitating meaningful conversations to engage financial institutions in market transformation. Aiming to simplify financial concepts for non-experts, this TA empowers SMEs to confidently engage with International Finance Cooperation (IFC) discussions.

Ms. Maro Luisa SCHULTE, Expert for SWITCH-Asia PSC TA on Plastics Governance Engagement addressed the innovation in the TA's shift from traditional environmental focus to a broader, systemic approach in tackling the root cause of plastic pollution. She emphasised the need to "close the tap" by engaging in global negotiations and advocating for a comprehensive agreement. She also highlighted the unique aspect of including countries, especially importers, in the dialogue to represent diverse perspectives and ensure the impact of the treaty on all nations involved.

Mr. Thomas THOMAS, Senior expert for SWITCH-Asia PSC TA on Mobilising Business Action for Circular Economy in ASEAN mentioned the uniqueness of the TA's focus on engaging businesses as key drivers to address climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. He discussed the ASEAN CSR Network's role in championing responsible business within ASEAN and defined business contributions to sustainable development through guiding principles. Aiming to institutionalise circular economy practices, the TA seeks commitment from businesses for sustainability and positive societal impact.

5.2.1 Breakout 1: Plastics



The session was moderated by **Ms. Maro Luisa SCHULTE, Expert for SWITCH-Asia PSC TA** on Plastics Governance Engagement. It discussed coordination among experts, capitals, and ministries, showcasing achievements by SWITCH-Asia Grants to Delegations, sectoral approaches, the importance of intergovernmental treaties despite imperfections, and translating complex technical language into simpler terms for policymakers and the public.

5.2.2 Breakout 2: SCP Investments and Market Transformation



The session was moderated by **Mr. Vic ABAINZA, Development Finance Specialist for SWITCH-Asia PSC and Consultant, ADFIAP**, and **Mr. Sanjoy SANYAL, SME and Innovation Finance Expert for SWITCH-Asia PSC**. Mr. ABAINZA took the audience through the detailed financial landscape of two large Southeast companies to provide an understanding of the scope of the project: identifying enabling policies, ease of making climate investments, MSME access to finance, climate financing instruments and capacity building measures. Sanjoy Sanyal presented a summary for several other countries: Bhutan, India, Lao PDR and Vietnam.

The presentation then delved into two important questions to promote SCP relevant SME investment: “what do we know” and “what should we do”. The three ways in which international development financial institution capital flows to SMEs were discussed: through local banks, investment funds and direct investments were discussed. Credit lines had systemic importance as they have been used in counties of various sizes. Investment funds, on the other hand, are more focused in fast developing middle income countries. There are significant gaps in the capacities of local Asian financial institutions in understanding and implementing standards like TCFD. Similarly, there are also gaps among Asian organisations in the implementation of standards like TNFD and CSRD.

In terms of what needs to be done, across Asia, there is a need to engage financial institutions. Existing financial institution partners of the international development financial institutions need to be supported to scope out climate financing opportunities and develop their capabilities to implement the TCFD standards. Large corporate organisations, where international development financial institutions have investments in, should be supported to make their SME supply chains “green” and gear up to meet standards such as CSRD. New financing programmes for SCP SMEs should leverage the existing relationships of the international development financial institutions. However, since the nature of the economies differ so widely, there is need to adapt this approach tailored to country circumstances. The specific initiatives that work for large fast-growing middle-income countries (MICs), for instance, may not work for the least developed countries (LDCs).

Grantee organisations, working across multiple countries, indicated that they needed much better understanding of the financing landscape in their countries. The grantee organisations are typically staffed with technical people and having support on understanding the finance landscape would help in the access to finance components of their work. The presentation which attempted to “demystify” the financing world was appreciated, in that context. It was also mentioned that if grantee organisations could know whom to access for commercial finance and what the conditions of that financing it would help them to be more efficient in their work.

One suggestion was briefly discussed. Since funding often moves to larger organisations, grantee organisations can consider “umbrella” organisations to aggregate the financing of multiple MSMEs. A suggestion was also made that local financial institutions can be made proactively aware of the grant projects that are being undertaken in their countries. This will help them understand how they can use the grant projects to create a pipeline and to better use the EU’s blending facilities. The importance of helping Asian financial institutions (especially banks which have large economy wide impact) to develop capabilities to understand climate risks and develop climate financing strategies was raised in inputs that came from PSC team members. It was also discussed that actively consulting local financial institutions would help in identifying opportunities to use EFSD+ guarantee and other blending facilities.

5.2.3 Breakout 3: Green Public Procurement



The session was moderated by **Dr. Lunchakorn PRATHUMRATANA, GPP Expert** and presentations were delivered by **Mr. Sanjay KUMAR, Senior GPP Expert**, **Dr. Katharine THODAY, GPP Practitioner**, and **Ms. Elodie MARIA-SUBE, EU policy development expert of SWITCH-Asia PSC**. Mr. KUMAR’s presentation emphasized the potential of public procurement, valued at approximately US\$11 trillion globally, as a powerful tool for governments to achieve sustainable development goals. The intervention aims to integrate the environmental dimension into procurement specifications, disqualifying offers that don’t meet minimum environmental requirements and fostering transparency in public financial management. Key learnings include the

integration of S/GPP policies into the national development objectives of Bangladesh, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Vietnam. Implementation requires a multidisciplinary approach and collaboration across government levels and stakeholders, necessitating support from the private sector, development partners, and civil society. Dr. THODAY highlighted global GPP developments, including a Joint Statement on Sustainable Procurement Initiatives by Multi-lateral Development banks and efforts by the International Federation of Consulting Engineers (FIDIC) to promote climate-aligned standards in procurement bids. Ms. MARIA-SUBE outlined the EU's impact, emphasizing proposals like the Eco-design Sustainable Product Regulation and sector-specific initiatives, signaling a transformative shift. Political commitments, such as zero-emission buildings by 2030, are expected to be adopted, influencing EU businesses. H.E Lina NGIN, Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Royal Government of Cambodia, acknowledged SWITCH-Asia's support in Green Public Procurement, aligning with the Kingdom's newly adopted Environmental Code. The report showcases a dynamic landscape in sustainable procurement globally, with evolving strategies and commitments.



5.2.4 Breakout 4: Circular Economy Knowledge Hubs and Stakeholder Platforms: Advancing Regional Knowledge and Experiences



The session was moderated by **Dr. Rene VAN BERKEL, Senior Expert on Circular Economy for SWITCH Asia PSC** who kicked off proceedings by reminding the audience that knowledge is power to act, provided this knowledge can be found, is actionable to end-users and addresses their needs, interests and priorities. Specific to circular economy (CE) there is a further challenge that the concept is understood differently, ranging from a modern waste management practice to economic development and innovation strategy. The

SWITCH-Asia PSC introduced two technical advisories for the ASEAN region, focusing on Circular Economy (CE). The upgraded [ASEAN Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform \(ACESP\)](#) was presented by **Mr. Treesuvit ARRIYAVATAT**.

Mr. Thomas THOMAS, ASEAN CSR Network, introduced the business action for circular economy, aiming to create a unifying framework, analyze experiences, and promote joint business action, grounded in responsible business conduct and circular solutions co-creation. Discussions occurred at three thematic tables.

Table 1, moderated by **Dr. PRAMUALRATANA**, focused on understanding the opportunities, challenges and success factors of Circular Economy Knowledge Hubs and Stakeholder Platforms for influencing stakeholders in adopting circular economy. The importance of cross-sharing locally appropriate and culturally sensitive circular economy experiences and practices from the region was emphasized. Moreover, to overcome language barriers, suggestions to explore Artificial Intelligence for multilingual knowledge access were proposed. Sustainable business and financing models have also been considered crucial to ensure the sustainability of Circular Economy Platforms.

Table 2, moderated by **Mr. THOMAS**, delved into engaging business and industry, stressing diverse strategies for different sectors and firm sizes, advocating CE as a positive value proposition, and promoting education for both demand and supply.

Table 3, moderated by **Mr. Zafar Makhmudov, Executive Director at The Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia** addressed civil society engagement, navigating differences in CE interpretations, and focusing on practical opportunities to break indifference. Communication providing tangible benefits and incentivizing action was highlighted.



Summarizing discussions, **Dr. VAN BERKEL** emphasised designing knowledge and engagement initiatives with a two-way interactive modality, tailored to diverse target groups. He underscored CE as actionable and attainable, presenting opportunities for both businesses and society, fostering alignment among stakeholders on the necessity, intent, and operationalization of CE. The report portrays a comprehensive approach to promoting CE in the ASEAN region, acknowledging varied perspectives and challenges while emphasizing collaboration and practical solutions.

5.2.5 Breakout 5: Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP)-linked Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC)



The session was moderated by **Mr. Ranga PALLAWALA, Key Expert of SWITCH-Asia PSC**. It emphasised six key elements: importance, ambition, complexity, specificity, SMEs, and engagement. While acknowledging the significance of integrating Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) with Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), participants highlighted the need for a more nuanced and step-by-step approach to realize ambitious targets. The complexity of addressing climate change, including quantification and methodology challenges, was recognised. Specificities of working cultures and governance, even within a regional approach, were deemed crucial. The focus on SMEs as a new opportunity for climate integration highlighted their central role. Lastly, wide-ranging engagement strategies, starting from national focal points and tailoring to specific country needs, were emphasized for effective progress.

Key Takeaways:

1. The Plastics Governance Engagement session underscored the importance of coordination among experts, capitals, and ministries. Emphasising a sectoral approach highlighted its significance in developing bottom-up solutions. Despite imperfections, intergovernmental treaties were considered the best international option. The recommendation included translating complex technical language into simpler terms for policymakers and the public.
2. Financial briefings are essential, especially for sector experts unfamiliar with engaging financial institutions. Grant projects play a crucial role in navigating complexities and creating enduring impacts. Addressing awareness gaps, such as those related to the EFSD+ guarantee scheme, is vital for delivering expertise to grant implementers. Educating projects about existing financial mechanisms is crucial for creating demand.
3. The implementation of Green Public Procurement necessitates a multidisciplinary approach, fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders. Green procurement policies are integral to national development objectives and are integrated within broader green policies.
4. The success of Circular Economy (CE) knowledge hubs relies on ensuring relevance and information exchange with other platforms. Unique engagement strategies are vital for business and industry, focusing on the circular economy as a value proposition. Language challenges suggest exploring AI for access. Sustainable business models are crucial for ongoing knowledge platform access. Initiatives should be two-way interactive.

5. A small and step-by-step approach is crucial for integrating Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) with Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and achieving ambitious targets. Recognition of the complexity in addressing climate change challenges, quantification, and methodology is essential. Understanding working cultures, governance specificities, and focusing on SMEs were deemed crucial. Effective progress necessitates wide-ranging engagement strategies tailored to specific country needs, involving national focal points.

5.3 Session 2: Regional Priorities

Objectives of the Session:

- Exchange ideas and share insights on developing and mainstreaming Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) and circular economy policies and strategies, drawing inspiration from ongoing Technical Advisories (TAs).
- Explore tactics and methodologies for advancing the implementation of these actions in practical contexts.
- Identify common areas of interest and potential opportunities for future collaboration and partnership.

5.3.1 Breakout 1: Central Asia



Dr. VAN BERKEL summarised the discussion, addressing various initiatives and dialogues that occurred during the session. Alignment with multi-annual indicative programs (MIPs) for Central Asia and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) cooperation frameworks was highlighted. The discussion encompassed potential technical advisories, with a consensus on focusing on building and tourism. An intriguing suggestion emerged for a joint intervention to bring Central Asian countries together. A notable topic surfaced, termed a nexus of agri-food, tourism, water, and energy. The idea is to explore opportunities for livelihood creation, enhance agri-food value, boost tourism attractiveness, and address issues like micro hydro power generation and water management. The concept proposed a scoping exercise for potential pilots, creating an enabling framework for implementation. Acknowledging that executing such pilots might go beyond the SWITCH-Asia PSC's scope, it was suggested that ongoing or recently completed grant projects or bilateral cooperation could take up these initiatives.

The discussion also touched upon the selection of a Central Asian country to host the next SWITCH-Asia Annual Meeting. In summary, the session explored strategic alignments, potential technical advisories, and a new approach towards an integrated development nexus in the region. The emphasis on collaboration, cross-sector opportunities, and sustainable pilot projects showcased a forward-looking approach in promoting holistic development in Central Asia.

5.3.2 Breakout 2: South Asia



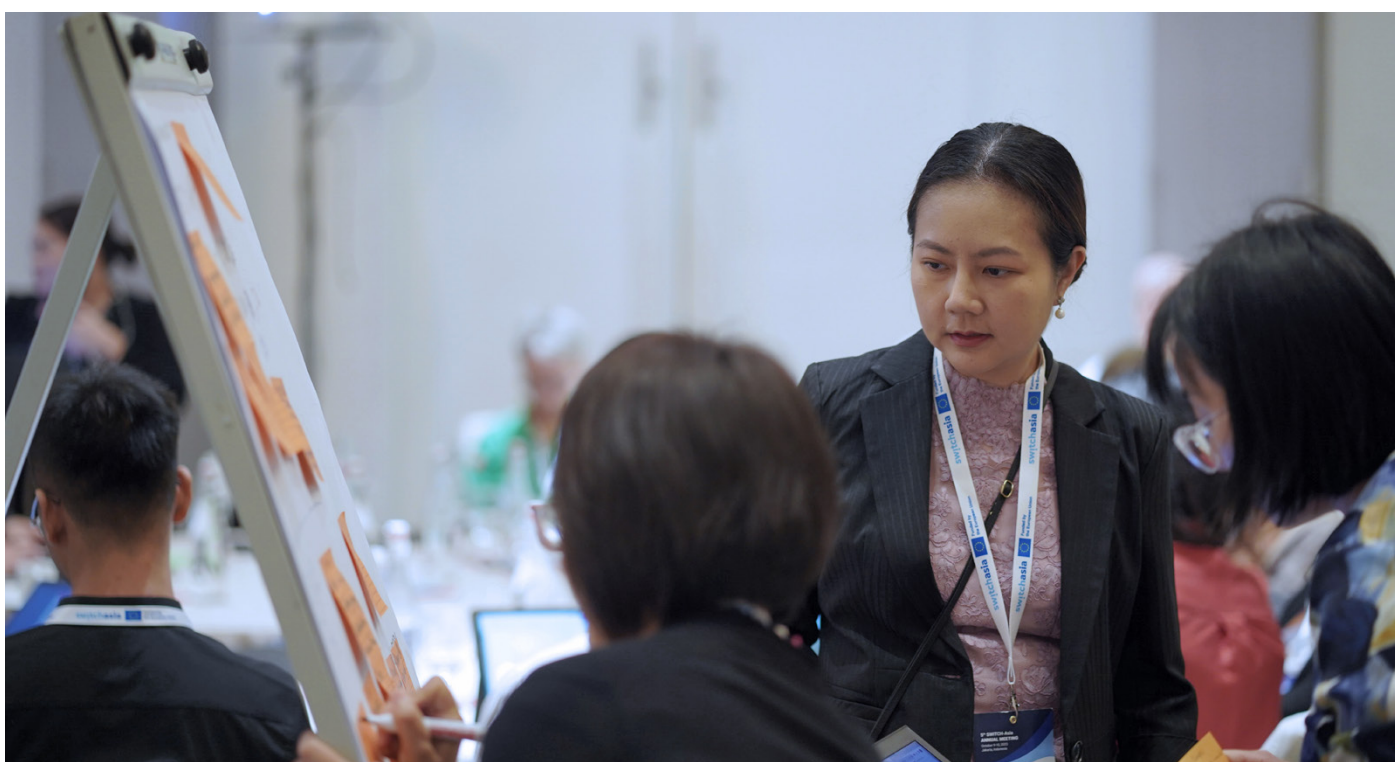
Mr. PALLAWALA summarised that the discussion on South Asia emphasised its diversity in interests, development status, size, population, and governance systems. While recognising some disintegration in collaboration, there was an acknowledgment of common areas for cooperation, particularly in tourism, trade, and waste management. Key priorities emerged, with a strong focus on eco-tourism and sustainable practices within the tourism sector. Waste management, especially dealing with plastics, was widely discussed, along with the importance of construction in enhancing energy and material efficiency, resilience for disasters, and managing debris in disaster situations. The discussion highlighted SMEs and entrepreneurship as pivotal across various sectors like tourism and waste management, emphasizing the need for support in adopting sustainable consumption and production practices. Access to finance and entrepreneurship development were also key considerations. The importance of raising awareness about Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) was emphasized, acknowledging a lack of understanding amid various competing topics like climate change and disaster risk. Education and capacity development were deemed crucial to address this gap. Common themes like extended producer responsibility, eco-labelling, and innovation were also discussed, reflecting a comprehensive approach to sustainable development.



5.3.3 Breakout 3: Southeast Asia, Mongolia, and China



Dr. PRATHUMRATANA moderated this session, with inputs from **Dr. Anthony CHIU**, Senior Expert for SWITCH-Asia PSC, and **Ms. Elodie MARIA-SUBE**, EU policy development expert of SWITCH-Asia PSC. The objective of the session was to identify Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) or Circular Economy (CE) policy gaps for the vast and diverse region of South-East Asia, Mongolia. The session was by far the most attended among the regional break-outs, possibly because the Annual Event took place in South East Asia. Ms. Maria-Sube presented the policy context of the region, highlighting EU policies, the status of SDG 12 in the region, and the vastly different experiences with regards to climate change in the region. Participants were then divided into three groups and invited to think about existing SCP/CE policies in their regions, how SCP is mainstreamed, and what have been the implementation challenges. Generally, there is a wealth of existing policies in the region, but challenges remain in their roll-out, which is usually a recent experience. Other challenges highlighted included: financial limitations, lack of data and baselines, low awareness, limited engagement with the private sector, lack of international legislation (plastic treaty is much awaited), lack of quality/green products, and a lack of incentives.



For the second round of discussions, Dr. PRATHUMRATANA presented the wealth of grants in the region, as well as the past Technical Assistance initiatives. The three groups were asked if they saw any trends in the existing grants and TA initiatives, whether they were aligned with policies, what the gaps were, if there were sectors to prioritise, and finally how SWITCH-Asia can better target those sectors through its grants or TAs. Generally, grants and TAs are aligned with SCP/CE policies, but it depends on the country context; sometimes SWITCH-Asia goes beyond existing policies in terms of sustainability awareness. Areas not covered mentioned included: Construction/buildings, Biodiversity, Regional Sourcing (Sand) as well as Innovation and transition policies. Many priority sectors were highlighted; these depend on the country context: Agri-food, urban food systems, Destination Tourism, Food Manufacturing, Cold Chain coverage, Textiles, Transportation, upskilling & re-skilling, Hazardous and e-waste, and Plastics. Some ideas to improve grant and TA targeting included: country-level TA-Grant coordination to identify gaps or assisting industry groups and associations to prepare TA-Grant proposals.

Mr. Keoveasna HUN from the EU SWITCH-Asia Switch Garment project wrapped up the session highlighting the diversity of the region and the need to anchor initiatives in each context. He noted that many policies already existed, and the challenges now consist mostly in implementing them. The exchanges were varied and fruitful, showing the need to foster more collaboration between the different stakeholders, such as the private sector, governments, and civil society.

5.3.4 Breakout 4: The Pacific



The participants who attended, online or in person, this regional session included representatives from Pacific countries (Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, and from Papua New Guinea), EU DG INTPA and EU Delegations to Timor Leste and Fiji, a Grant Project, and experts from the SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component and SWITCH-Asia Consortium.

The discussion centred around their comprehension of Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) following a concise presentation on SCP and Circular Economy (CE) and its potential contribution to a low-carbon, resource-efficient, circular economy. Key challenges were outlined, including the triple planetary crisis, with Pacific countries grappling with the impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. It was observed that SCP is not prominently featured in the country's policy agenda but is more evident in sectoral issues related to pollution, specifically waste and plastic, agri-food, access to food, fisheries, and tourism. Additionally, building and construction emerged as another priority, particularly in exploring alternatives for building materials and adopting resource-efficient practices.

The discussion further highlighted traditional practices and the lifestyle of Pacific communities, which are considered SCP practices. There was emphasis on supporting and promoting sustainable products that were traditionally produced and used, encompassing food, packaging, among other items. The need to provide policy support and capacity building for SMEs to foster eco-innovation and access technologies for the circularity of sustainable products and services, was identified, with a focus on potential circular products from waste.

Moreover, support is required for the country's implementation and reporting on SDG 12, concentrating on waste reduction, assistance to businesses and SMEs, and contributing to SCP-related goals through SME support in priority sectors such as agri-food, tourism, housing, and buildings, among others. Projects and initiatives addressing these challenges and priorities, funded by the EU, were underscored. It was emphasised that there is a benefit in sharing experiences and drawing lessons from SWITCH-Asia Technical Advisories (TAs) and grant projects implemented in Asia through the SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component (PSC) Technical Advisory in the Pacific. The TA's policy analysis and engagement strategy aim to support the Pacific, considering the local context and challenges faced in the region. The TA aspires to contribute to and complement the efforts of countries, organisations, and stakeholders in the Pacific in mainstreaming SCP in policies and practices, aligning with the SAMOA Pathway and achieving international commitments such as the SDGs and the Paris Agreement.

5.4 Session 3: Thematic Priorities

5.4.1 Roundtable 1: Agri-food



Ms. Elodie MARIA-SUBE, Key Expert of SWITCH-Asia PSC, and Ms. Kuntum MELATI, Research Fellow at the Stockholm Environment Institute, jointly moderated this roundtable on Agri-Food. While the existing food system has supported a rapidly growing population and fossil fuel-led economic development, productivity gains have incurred a cost. The food industry is responsible for almost a quarter of global greenhouse gas emissions. Simultaneously, mismanagement of fertilisers has led to the eutrophication of waterways, and the use of chemical pesticides has degraded the natural resources vital to the food system. These practices not only pollute the environment but also impact public health. Participants were initially tasked with envisioning a more sustainable and equitable food system in their country/city. Subsequently, they described a path to achieve that vision and expressed interest in developing a roadmap along a specific value chain.

The envisioned food system aimed at offering improved nutrition, vibrant local communities, healthier ecosystems, and a significantly reduced climate impact. As part of this vision, several systems or tools were proposed, including Regenerative agriculture, Organic agriculture, Slow food, local food, Zero Food Waste, Resource Efficiency, Reduced dependency on animal-based products, and green packaging. These systems had already outlined pathways for the necessary transformation, further detailed when responding to the second question, which focused on enabling factors such as appropriate policies, market development, education, and capacity building. Examples of enablers included anti-food waste legislation, seed banks, involvement of schools in promoting healthy diets, equal contract farming, producer/buyer coordination, geographical indicators, building on SWITCH-Asia grants, multistakeholder platforms, and sustainable Agri-tourism.

Some participants expressed interest in concrete solutions such as (i) food waste mapping, especially at the city level, but restricted to smaller city areas or neighbourhoods of larger cities, (ii) a Digital Platform for Agri-investments and markets, and (iii) Building public-private partnerships in food value chains. Several value chains were discussed, including Coffee, Cashew, Rice, Vegetables, Fruits, Sugar, Tofu, Millets, Beans, and Indigenous crops. Concerning rice, it was recommended to build on the results of the Sustainable Rice Platform.



5.4.2 Roundtable 2: Building and Construction

Mr. Florian Johannes BERANEK moderated a roundtable discussion that underscored the substantial impact of the built environment on natural resources, energy consumption, and the urgent need for sustainability and circular economy initiatives. Key statistics were presented, including the projection that the global building stock would double by 2050, buildings consuming 40% of energy and causing 40% of CO2 emissions, and construction being a major contributor to global water consumption and material use.

To address the complexity of the built environment, Mr. BERANEK proposed working across lifecycle stages: Planning and Design, Materials, Construction, Operational time (Facility Management), and End-of-Life. The ensuing discussion explored models of circularity at each stage, revealing various perspectives, challenges, opportunities, and insights. The group identified subjects for consideration by the SWITCH Asia PSC's Technical Advisory (TA) projects:

- **Improved Building Lifespan:** Establishing technical and operational standards for enhanced building durability, considered foundational for the built environment.
- **Affordable and Achievable Standards:** New standards should be affordable, achievable, acceptable, applicable, and accountable.
- **Quality Infrastructure (QI):** Emphasizing the importance of QI in line with sustainability goals, following the same 5"A" principles.
- **International Cooperation:** Acknowledging the critical role of international cooperation and exchange in fostering standards and QI.
- **Operational Stage Significance:** Recognising the significant opportunities for sustainable and circular practices during the operational stage, particularly in maintenance and facility management.



Participants from Bangladesh and Nepal highlighted the need for dedicated support in the housing sector for lower-income families, as current green building initiatives often target large urban projects. A participant from China proposed using material and processing standards to support the use of local materials, contributing to heritage preservation and local circular economy practices.

The consensus was that overcoming the perceived complexity of the construction sector could unlock innovation, job creation, and true circularity, leading to human-centred cities and sustainable rural livelihoods. The discussion underscored the potential for SWITCH-Asia PSC's TA projects to address these challenges and drive positive change in the built environment.

5.4.3 Roundtable 3: Resource Use and Climate Change: Innovations for the transition towards Resource Efficient Low-Carbon Economies

Three consecutive quick-fire roundtable discussions were held involving all conference participants to discuss the need for and opportunities for innovation to unlock progress towards a low-carbon and resource-efficient economy and associated policy challenges.

Mr. Ranga PALLAWALA, Key Expert of SWITCH Asia PSC, highlighted the urgency to increase climate action in response to scientific findings on climate change. Emphasizing the need for balanced mitigation and adaptation efforts, he underscored the growing interest in resource efficiency and the circular economy within national policies. **Mr. Rene VAN BERKEL** positioned innovation as a crucial solution to the triple planetary crises, emphasizing its role in addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, and waste accumulation.

Participants shared examples of cleantech innovations, clustering them based on contributions to climate change, biodiversity, and waste reduction. While many innovations focused on individual environmental challenges, some addressed combinations, such as green chemistry for both climate and waste. Integrated urban planning emerged as an example with triple planetary benefits.



Constraints for innovation were discussed, leading to identified policy requirements and options. Suggestions included focusing research grant funding on the circular economy, building consensus on low-carbon solutions, improving support for innovation incubators, applying assessment frameworks for circular solutions, and developing mission-driven innovation policies.

Countries expressed interest in a comparative analysis of environmental innovation policies, seeking to promote best practices within the Asia-Pacific region. This collaborative effort aligns with the mission of SWITCH Asia PSC, providing a platform for knowledge exchange and fostering innovative solutions to address the interconnected challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and waste accumulation.



6. FINAL REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

The participants took a moment to share their reflections on various aspects of the SWITCH-Asia Annual Meeting, providing insights into their experiences and takeaways.



Appreciation for Various Aspects

Participants from diverse backgrounds expressed their appreciation for different aspects of the Conference. They particularly valued the networking opportunities, citing the chance to connect with new people as a standout feature. Furthermore, GOPA Worldwide Consultants (lead implementing partner) praised the success of the Conference, acknowledging the technical and human perspectives seamlessly woven into the event.

New and Surprising Learnings

The reflections unveiled new and surprising learnings from the Conference. For instance, an expert found insights into the private sector to be particularly interesting. SOLIDARIDAD Network was intrigued by new concepts such as EFSD and Green Public Procurement. Grant projects dealing with plastics discovered the complexities of the plastic treaty and gained valuable insights into addressing associated challenges.

Intentions and Actions Based on Insights

Participants expressed their intentions to translate insights into concrete actions and explore additional avenues for collaboration. The SUSTOUR Laos project suggested focusing on both successes and challenges in project discussions, fostering a more comprehensive understanding.

Recommendations for the Future of SWITCH-Asia

Several recommendations were put forth for the future of SWITCH-Asia. Enhanced support for SMEs to access grants, a more coordinated approach to technical assistance on circular economy projects, and a robust exit strategy for grants were suggested.

The importance of inviting diverse stakeholders to SWITCH-Asia Annual Events for a more comprehensive and inclusive perspective was also highlighted. Other reflections emphasized the value of continued networking and meeting new people.

Final Remarks

Mr. JANAWAY expressed his appreciation for specific sessions, highlighting those focused on the Pacific, GPP, and NDC/STC. Emphasizing key phrases like awareness raising and changing mindsets, he aspired to reach low-hanging fruits in the early stages of SWITCH-Asia phase three. Acknowledging feedback, both positive and negative, he committed to applying it, particularly concerning the grant component. He underscored the significance of innovation and strengthened business engagement with industry, especially in local innovation linked to SCP ecosystems. Looking to the future, he hoped to witness the impact and results of SWITCH-Asia phase three by the next Annual Conference, expressing optimism for Middle East involvement. He extended gratitude to the team, GOPA, experts, implementing partners, EU delegations, various governments, organisations, and the EU delegation to Indonesia, and H.E. Sujiro SEAM for actively participating in this event.

Dr. FADEEVA emphasised the urgency of innovation and ambitions beyond 'comfortable' paths of development amid challenging global circumstances, citing wars and crises, notably in Ukraine. The SWITCH-Asia Annual Conference, marking the onset of phase three, aimed to connect disparate topics while acknowledging the risks inherent in such ambitious endeavours. The overarching message highlighted the need for collective co-developments and actions even in the face of potential failures. The SWITCH-Asia team successfully initiated conversations on various policy and business aspects, fostering discussions on plastic usage, construction, finance, innovation, agri-food, GPP, and the circular economy. Acknowledging the invaluable contributions of advisors, supporters, national governments, and partner institutions, the Team Leader expressed her gratitude towards all stakeholders. The team's dedication and seamless coordination, overcoming physical limitations, were commended, leading to a successful Conference. Looking forward, Dr. FADEEVA expressed anticipation for future regional and country-wise meetings, extending gratitude to collaborators and affirming the event's significance. The speech concluded with heartfelt appreciation for the team's tireless efforts, emphasising the importance, enjoyment, and constructive nature of the conference.

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