



English Translation of the

Declaration Issued by the Dresden Nexus Conference (DNC2020)

A Circular Economy for a Sustainable Society

Climate change, the decline in biodiversity and the increasing scarcity of resources are man-made challenges threatening our livelihoods and prosperity. As a result, sustainability has become a necessity that is set forth in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The legal framework set by political decision-makers, along with the economy, and consumer behavior all play a crucial role in tackling the issue; especially since production and consumption patterns can be directly responsible for environmental problems. Beyond that, considerations of cost and competition pose significant challenges. By contrast, a circular economy with a capacity for positive systemic change can promote innovation, add value, reduce the consumption of resources, minimise waste generation and contribute significantly to securing the supply of raw materials. In short, it has the potential to initiate a paradigm shift.

"A Circular Economy for a Sustainable Society" is the motto for the Dresden Nexus Conference (DNC) 2020, which will shine a light on the resource perspective of the circular economy and its social dimensions. The DNC Declaration aims to spark a scientific and political debate on core questions such as how the transition to a circular economy can be accelerated, and how this economic template can become a standard. Of key interest in this regard are questions as to how uniform international standards can be established on a global level through knowledge

transfer, sharing experiences and digitisation, and how instruments can be established for anchoring the principle of circular economy in cities and regions. The signatories of the Declaration consider the following topics top priorities for the systematic development of new approaches.

Policies for Sustainable Change

In the political realm, thoughtful discussion of the challenges facing the circular economy should be intensified; laying the groundwork for needed governance innovations.

In order to roll out the circular economy within the existing institutions and government structures, it is necessary to identify the appropriate policy instruments. Critical synergies and gaps need to be identified in order to ensure a coherent policy.

Technical and Biological Cycles

The optimisation of existing products and processes, and the development of new products and processes can extend the service life of goods; improve their reusability, as well as their ability to be repaired or restored. As a result, unavoidable waste would be significantly reduced while decreasing the consumption of resources, taking into account the particularities of agri-food systems, water management, energy systems, building stock and infrastructure.

Economic Options

New business models and technologies that may positively impact the competitiveness of the circular economy should be promoted. To this end, instruments and methods for a comprehensive life cycle analysis can be developed further. Corporate reporting that takes environmental aspects into account should be adopted widely. In addition, sustainable financing of the circular economy must be ensured; taking into account global competition.

Focus on Social Systems

Citizens must be involved in relevant processes from the very beginning: appropriate action must be identified to mobilise civil society forces for a sustainable circular economy. Social innovations, digitisation and capacity development should be promoted to foster sustainable social change.

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A Nexus Approach to Environmental Resources

The Nexus approach considers the interactions between environmental resources and their users. This allows for the analysis of synergies and conflicts from a system perspective. The aim is to develop a strategic set of options that help relieve the pressure on our planet's resources. This approach can be used to identify opportunities for action with high impact potential, and to leverage them in the appropriate geographic context. An accelerated transition to a circular economy can optimise the recovery of resources, increase reuse potentials and, at the same time, contribute to climate protection. Therefore, circular economies of any scale can enable a society to forge its path towards sustainability by curbing consumption of resources, increasing efficiencies and limiting environmental damage.