



ACEA 2025 ANNUAL MEETING CONCEPT NOTE

THEME: “Continental Alignment for Circular Economy Transformation in Africa”

DATE: 14TH – 16TH October 2025

LOCATION: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

BACKGROUND

The African Circular Economy Alliance (ACEA) is a country-led coalition of African nations committed to accelerating Africa’s transition to a circular economy that delivers economic growth, job creation, and positive environmental outcomes. Established in 2016 during the World Economic Forum on Africa in Kigali, Rwanda, and officially launched at the UNFCCC COP23 in Bonn, Germany in 2017, the Alliance serves as a high-level platform to advance the circular economy agenda across national, regional, and continental levels. ACEA achieves this through policy development, leadership and advocacy, knowledge sharing, and scaling up circular economy businesses and projects.

Founded by Rwanda, Nigeria, and South Africa, the Alliance has expanded significantly and now includes 17 member countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ghana, Madagascar, Mauritius, Morocco, Senegal, and Sudan, alongside the three founding members. Its vision is for all African countries to join the movement towards a thriving, inclusive, and sustainable circular economy. The Alliance is also supported by strategic partners, including the African Development Bank (AfDB), which hosts the ACEA Secretariat; the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); the UN Environment Programme (UNEP); Ellen MacArthur Foundation (EMF); Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI); the Government of Finland; the World Economic Forum (WEF) and a host of others.

Since 2020, ACEA has made significant progress in advancing its mandate. Informed by in-depth market analysis, the Alliance identified five priority opportunity areas — known as the “5 Big Bets”, where circular approaches can generate substantial economic, social, and environmental benefits: food systems, packaging, the built environment, fashion and textiles, and electronics. ACEA has convened governments, private sector actors, and development partners to exchange knowledge, align priorities, and coordinate action. Additionally, member countries are also making notable progress in embedding circular economy principles into national policies and business strategies. ACEA has played a catalytic role in this shift through a range of initiatives, including collaborating with the AfDB Africa Circular Economy Facility (ACEF) for the development of National Circular Economy Roadmaps and the AfriCircular Innovators Programme, which fosters entrepreneurship and innovation in circular solutions. ACEA has also played a leading role in regional integration efforts, such as engaging with the African Organisation for Standardisation (ARSO) in creating the recycled PET (rPET) standard to harmonise materials use across borders and promote a continental market for recycled plastics. These examples illustrate the



Alliance's broader efforts to strengthen enabling environments, catalyze partnerships, and facilitate knowledge sharing.

Most recently, the African Union Commission launched its Circular Economy Action Plan, marking a significant milestone in the continent's collective transition. ACEA aims to serve as the primary engagement platform for its implementation, aligning national, regional, and continental efforts, advancing regional integration, and fostering collaboration among governments, businesses, and development partners to accelerate the adoption of circular practices across Africa.

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Africa is currently experiencing a growth of circular economy initiatives at both national and sub-national levels. Governments across the continent are becoming more aware and adopting strategies and policies that promote circular approaches. Others are beginning to adopt regulatory frameworks in key areas such as food systems, electronics, plastics recycling, and sustainable construction. At the same time, businesses and entrepreneurs are piloting innovative solutions that demonstrate the commercial viability of circular practices. These initiatives are contributing to economic growth, job creation, and environmental protection. However, despite these positive developments, most efforts remain fragmented and largely localized, with limited cross-border coordination or knowledge exchange. This fragmentation prevents the continent from fully leveraging economies of scale, unlocking regional markets, and accelerating industrialization within the circular economy sector¹.

The 2025 ACEA Annual Meeting seeks to provide a strategic platform for engagement on addressing this fragmentation and catalyze coordinated action. The meeting will aim to convene a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including national governments, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE), private sector actors, investors, and regional and international development partners. By bringing these actors together, the meeting will facilitate dialogue on aligning ongoing initiatives, harmonizing policy approaches, and creating a shared vision for regional circular economy development. It will foster South-South cooperation by enabling member countries to share experiences, highlight impactful partnerships, and collaborate to advance circular economy solutions across the continent. This alignment is essential not only for opening regional markets and fostering investment but also for identifying scalable business opportunities, reducing barriers to trade, and ensuring that circular economy strategies are integrated across policy, industrial, and financial frameworks².

The African Union Commission's recently launched Continental CE Action Plan (CEAP) provides a continental blueprint for advancing circular economy solutions, emphasizing the importance of regional integration and multi-stakeholder collaboration. Through structured discussions and knowledge sharing, the Annual Meeting will support the translation of continental priorities into actionable strategies

¹ ACEA

² AfCFTA



that can be implemented at national and regional levels. It will provide a space to identify investment-ready opportunities, facilitate partnerships, and explore mechanisms to harmonize standards and regulations, all of which are essential to create a cohesive and functional continental circular economy ecosystem (African Union Commission, 2025).

ACEA has already demonstrated leadership in promoting regional integration and harmonization through initiatives such as the development of the recycled PET (rPET) standard in partnership with the African Organisation for Standardisation (ARSO). This standard exemplifies how regional coordination can create unified markets for recycled materials, enabling cross-border trade, supporting industrial scaling, and improving access to investment. Such examples illustrate ACEA's capacity to convene stakeholders, facilitate collaboration, and support regional approaches that bridge national policies with continental objectives (ARSO, 2024; African Circular Economy Alliance, 2025).

By fostering alignment at continental, regional, and national levels, the 2025 ACEA Annual Meeting will help consolidate fragmented circular economy initiatives, unlock economies of scale, and accelerate Africa's transition toward a sustainable, inclusive, and circular economic model. The meeting will serve as a platform for strategic discussions that bring all stakeholders to the table, ensure that markets are integrated, highlight investment opportunities, and address barriers to cross-border trade and collaboration. Ultimately, this convening will strengthen Africa's position in the global circular economy, ensuring that regional integration becomes a cornerstone of industrialization and sustainable development on the continent (African Circular Economy Alliance, 2025; UNEP, 2022).

OBJECTIVES

The following are the objectives of the Annual Meeting;

- Promote alignment across national, regional, and continental circular economy initiatives to foster coherence and scale.
- Mobilize political and technical momentum to implement National CE roadmaps, AUC CEAP, and other upcoming CE initiatives.
- Explore the role of regional institutions and frameworks—including AfCFTA, ARSO, and RECs—to drive circular economy industrialization and integration across African value chains.
- Deepen collaboration between ACEA member countries and regional technical partners to accelerate policy harmonization, innovation, and investment.
- Identify shared priorities and actionable next steps to strengthen cross-country learning and joint implementation efforts, including through South-South and Triangular Cooperation.

PARTNERING ORGANIZATION



United Nations Development Programme (UNDP): As a strategic partner of the African Circular Economy Alliance (ACEA), UNDP will play a pivotal role in the 2025 Annual Meeting, serving as both content partner and logistical host in Addis Ababa. As the UN's lead agency on sustainable development, UNDP brings great convening power, technical expertise, and policy influence to the circular economy agenda. For this meeting, UNDP will provide in-kind support for the venue and event services, creating a seamless environment for high-level engagement. Beyond logistical hosting, it will work closely with ACEA to co-design the agenda, ensuring that discussions reflect broader sustainable development and economic transformation priorities for Africa. Leveraging its extensive network across African countries and regional bodies, UNDP will actively connect stakeholders, strengthen partnerships, and catalyze commitments.

The Partnership for Action on the Green Economy (PAGE) is an initiative that brings together five United Nations agencies: the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). PAGE's objective is to support countries engaged in the transition to greener and more inclusive pathways by fostering circularity, promoting green jobs and a just transition, and advancing sustainable finance. The workshop is supported by PAGE, which received contributions from European Union, Republic of Korea, Sweden, Germany, Norway, Finland and Switzerland.

TARGET PARTICIPANTS

- ACEA Member Countries
- ACEA Strategic Partners
- African Union Commission (AUC)
- Regional Economic Communities (RECs)
- Non-Regional Country Partners
- European Union Commission
- African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)
- African Organisation for Standardisation (ARSO)
- African Journalists (proposal for journalists to explore hosting the workshop on the sidelines of the Annual meeting so that they can cover the annual meeting and have a coordinated narrative for the CE in Africa)

AGENDA

Day 1: High-level opening and strategic context setting - Set the political and strategic direction, align with continental priorities (AU CEAP), and showcase Africa's progress



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Day 2: Technical and thematic deep dives - Address key technical gaps, policy harmonization needs, and investment bottlenecks; generate actionable recommendations.

Day 3: ACEA Strategic and governance meetings, CE field trip



DAY ONE: HIGH-LEVEL OPENING & STRATEGIC CONTEXT SETTING

TIME	SESSION	
	HIGH-LEVEL OPENING	EXPECTATION
	Moderator: Davinah Uwella Milenge Rapporteur:	
8:30 – 9:00 AM	Registration	
9:00 – 9:15 AM	Welcome Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dr. Alex Mubiru, Director General for the East Africa Region, African Development Bank - Dr. Mathias Naab, Director – UNDP Regional Service Centre for Africa 	
9:15 – 9:30 AM	Key remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ACEA Co-chair Country – Nigeria - H.E. Moses Vilakati - AUC Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment 	
9:30: – 10:00 AM	Introduction of participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Member states - Strategic Partners 	Introduction of participant – Member states to be led by Heads of Delegations
10:00 – 10:30 AM	Setting the Scene for the 2025 Annual Meeting - ACEA Secretariat <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ACEA Mandate and Structure - Progress made to date - Expectations for 2025 Annual Meeting 	Brief information on the activities and results of ACEA in the past calendar year since the last meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mandate and structure of ACEA - Update on action points from the last meeting - Update on key activities and results of the Alliance in the last year - Brief information on the expectations for the 2025 Annual meeting.
10:30 – 10:45 AM	Coffee break and group photo	
10:45 – 11:45 PM	Session 1: Presentations State of Play: <i>Progress, Opportunities, and Challenges in Africa's Circular Economy Landscape (evolution of the 5 Big Bets)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ellen MacArthur Foundation - UNDP – Hilda Van der Veen - UNEP - PAGE 	Strategic partners shall make presentations on the following: (10 minutes each) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overview of ongoing interventions on circular economy (Global and Africa) - Strategic view of CE progress in Africa (with flagship examples) - Challenges



	<p>Q&A: Moderator: Davinah Uwella Milenge (AfDB)</p> <p>Rapporteur: TBC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emerging opportunities / New areas / opportunities for CE development in Africa.
11:45 – 12:45	<p>Session 2: Presentation & Panel Discussion Pathways for regional integration for the CE in Africa: Aligning national, regional, and continental initiatives for coherence along the AUC CEAP</p> <p>Presentation by the African Union on the CEAP (10 mins)</p> <p>Setting the tone by the EU Delegation (10 mins)</p> <p>Panel discussion on national, sub-regional, and continental CE strategies/priorities (40 mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ARSO - AfCTA - 2 RECS (EAC, IOC) - Member State - Mauritius <p>Moderator: Joel Ayim Darkwah (UNDP)</p> <p>Rapporteur: TBC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Summary presentation by African Union on the AU CEAP (Background Vision, Mission, and Objectives; Priority Sectors; Cross-Cutting Enablers; Governance & Implementation). 2. Statement / Presentation by EU on EU-led CE investment in Africa; including support for the AU CEAP development; Strategic perspective on next steps for actualization of the AU CEAP goals. <p>Panel Discussion (Key questions)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RECs: (i) What is the status of CE development in your sub-region. (ii) What flagship initiatives are the REC Commissions championing; (iii) What is the foreseeable role of the REC Commissions in advancing regional coordination for CE development. - Member States: (i) What is the status of CE development in your country and what flagship initiatives are your Government championing (ii) How is inclusion being ensured beyond the focal ministries (environment) and what are the challenges (iii) What are the new opportunities Government foresee in CE development to enhance achievement of national and regional goals. - AfCFTA: (i) What instruments are available to support the development of CE value chains in Africa – especially for SMEs. (ii) What is the future of green business under the AfCFTA arrangement (iii) How practically can the AfCFTA facilitate CE development in the region - ARSO: (i) What does ARSO do in standard development in Africa, (ii) What standards have you developed for green and circular economy development and what is your



		recommendation for REC and member states for their implementation (iv) what is the future strategy for development of more green and circular standards.
12:45 – 1:45 PM	Lunch break	
1:45 PM – 2:45 PM	Session 4: Pitches by Thematic Partners Thematic Showcases: <i>CE opportunities within sectors, challenges, and value for regional integration</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Circularium (Plastics) - ITU (Electronics) - UNOPs/UNEP (Built Environment) - Textiles (UNEP) - NDC Integration and Financing (UNDP) 	10-minute presentation by Agencies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overview of projects and initiatives s - Best practices from implementation within the thematic areas - Key lessons - Opportunities for scale-up in African countries
2:45 – 3:00 PM	Coffee break	
3:00 – 4:30 PM	Session 5: Thematic Deepdives <i>Group Discussions with country members on scale-up opportunities and role of national and regional frameworks)</i> TRACK A: Plastics & Packaging: Circularium TRACK B: Built Environment: UNEP/UNOPs TRACK C: Electronics: ITU TRACK D: Textiles & Fashion: UNEP	Group Discussions to be led by Thematic Agencies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Groups to present recommendations for national actors, Regional (RECs), Continental (AU, AfCFTA, ARSO) <p>** Participants can engage in at least two group discussions.</p> <p>** Presentation guide for group discussion to be provided.</p>
4:30 – 5:00 PM	Groups report, Summary and closing Moderator: Gracia Munganga (Africa Circular Economy Network) Rapporteur: TBC	
DAY TWO		
TIME	SESSION	
9:00 – 9:30 AM	Day 1 Recap and Day 2 Introduction	Bonmwa Fwangkwai (AfDB/ACEA)
9:30 – 10:30 AM	Session 6: Fireside chat : Perspectives on the future of CE financing in Africa.	Questions for all Panelists:



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GEF - ACEF - EU - PAGE <p>Moderator: Hilda Van der Veen (UNDP)</p> <p>Rapporteur: TBC</p>	<p>(i) What has been the experience of your institution in CE investments in Africa (sectors, scale of investment)</p> <p>(ii) How is the financing landscape of CE investment looking. Is there need for structural changes for Africa to be strategically positioned for sustainable CE investment?</p> <p>(iii) What is your institution's strategic direction for CE investment in Africa</p>
10:30 – 11:00 AM	Coffee break	
11:00 – 12:00 AM	<p>Finnish Government Experience on in-country CE development.</p> <p>Session 7: Panel discussion</p> <p><i>Realizing CE results in-country – Harmonization & Policy Alignment, Investment & Financing, Technology & Innovation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SADC Member state – South Africa - ECOWAS Member state – Cote D'Ivoire - EAC Member state – Ethiopia - IOC Member state – Mauritius - Local Municipality - Addis Ababa <p>Moderator – Charles Akol, UNECA</p> <p>Rapporteur: TBC</p>	<p>1. Statement / Presentation by Finnish Government on Finland's experience in CE development (10 minutes)</p> <p>2. Panel discussion (Key Questions)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How will Government work with all key ministries and partners to ensure a nationally-owned and inclusive CE development - How can Government facilitate innovation - What steps will be taken to ensure that CE financing is prioritized at all levels of Government planning (eg. Inclusion in national and local government budgets) - How will Government facilitate the adoption and mainstreaming of harmonized policies and standards on CE (eg. AU CEAP, ARSO standards, AfCTFA instruments etc.)
12:00 – 12:30 PM	<p>Launch of the Plastics EPR case study: Government of Seychelles and UNDP</p> <p>Facilitated by UNDP</p>	<p>Launch of the Plastics EPR Case Study developed by UNDP-GEF Islands Indian Ocean Project and Government of Seychelles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brief introduction of the Seychelles EPR case study (Representative of Government of Seychelles) - Presentation / Outdooing of case study document
12:30 – 2:00 PM	Lunch break: Engagements with ACEA Co-chairs	
2:00 - 4:30 PM	<p>Workshop on Life Cycle Assessments (LCA)</p> <p>To be led by UNEP</p>	



4:30 – 5:00 PM	Closing	
DAY THREE		
TIME	SESSION	
9:00 – 10:00 AM	Day 2 Recap and Annual meeting Key takeaways and action plan; Strategy and prioritization for the Alliance Day Facilitator: Margaret Kamau (AfDB) Rapporteur: TBC	Open discussion - Key takeaways from different stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Member states ▪ Regional Bodies (AfCTA, RECs, ARSO, AU) ▪ Strategic Partners Key ideas for prioritization in the next year
10:00 – 10:30 AM	ACEA Stock-take	Reflections on the ACEA by Co-Chairs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rwanda - Nigeria - South Africa
10:30 – 11:00 AM	Welcome of new ACEA Member countries and partners Facilitator: ACEA Co-Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kenya - Madagascar - Zimbabwe - Seychelles - DR Congo - UNECA
11:00 – 11:30 AM	Coffee break	
11:30 – 12:30 PM	ACEA Secretariat Planning Session - 2026 Action Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACEA Strategy and Operationalization • Global CE commitments • Working Groups • Knowledge Creation 	Recommendations to ACEA Secretariat on the operationalization of meeting takeaways
12:30 – 12:40PM	Closing remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dr. Charles Nyandiga – Team Leader (Environment) - UNDP Regional Service Centre for Africa 	
12:40 – 1:30 PM	Lunch break	
1:30 – 5:00 PM	Site visit to a CE facility in Addis & Reflections	