



Over 750 participants from more than 60 countries participated in the World Resources Forum 2019, organized in Antwerp, Belgium, by the Public Waste Agency of Flanders (OVAM) and the WRF Secretariat. Her Majesty the Queen of Belgium, Advocate of the Sustainable Development Goals, attended the Opening Session. After 2 days of discussions in more than 50 sessions, the participants representing international, regional and national governments, business, research institutes and networks, and NGO's came to the following conclusions:

1. CIRCULAR ECONOMY ENABLER FOR CLIMATE POLICY

The potential for circular economy to enable carbon emission reductions is an 'overlooked' truth. The [figures](#) are clear: over half of greenhouse gas emissions can be directly linked to our materials footprint. We have to link the policy agendas on resource efficiency and climate change and break the silos by making strong connections between the networks, institutions and policies. Monitoring of the carbon and material footprint shows the current global impact of production and consumption patterns. Circularity and low carbon should become decisive criteria in funding and financial governance.

2. CITIES ARE PIONEERS OF CIRCULAR CHANGE

Cities are the places where distance between production and consumption is small and loops can be closed locally. Here, circular economy can thrive at best. With 60% of the world's population living in urban areas by 2030, the challenge is to urgently rethink our cities, to turn them into productive cities for the benefit of companies and citizens. Local knowledge and local action play a vital role. This way we can counter the brutal consequences of our linear economy where resources such as land and water are increasingly "extracted". They become scarce resources in the hands of a few, where loss of ownership forces people to migrate into urban areas, putting unsustainable pressure on cities.

3. SOIL AND LAND ARE IN NEED OF A SUPPORTING FRAMEWORK

Soil is more than food and fuel: soil is a natural capital, a cornerstone for human and ecosystem health and global natural cycles. With healthy soils, we can use less land to produce more. This creates space to return land to nature. Soil Organic Carbon should be taken more into account as important parameter to assess soil health and productivity. We need incentives to make the users of soil and land behave as stewards, by establishing a global policy framework and by creating synergies with other policies such as biodiversity, agriculture, energy and climate.

4. LIFESTYLES HAVE TO CHANGE RADICALLY OVER NEXT DECADES

To achieve the SDG's and the climate targets, changes in consumer lifestyles need to be radical and need to start now. The recent [1.5 Degree Lifestyles Report](#) shows that within the next 30 years, citizens in many industrialized countries have to reduce their carbon footprints by 80-90% or more and in emerging economies by 30-80%, to reach the 1.5 degree climate target. To change our lifestyles, we need proper infrastructure, regulations, pricing, education. Just raising awareness and exchanging information is not enough to mobilize the critical mass that is needed to make the real systemic breakthroughs for institutional change. Lifestyles changes should be based on both efficiency and sufficiency policies. The young generation is protesting in the streets. They put pressure on decision makers to finally act. They trigger a broad societal debate on our lifestyles. Of course not one size fits all. A just and inclusive transition requires a holistic approach of all SDG's. If we can image the future, we can create it together.

5. THE TRANSITION TO A CIRCULAR ECONOMY NEEDS COORDINATED GLOBAL ACTION

Many promising circular and low carbon initiatives to achieve SDG's are ongoing. It is matter now of scaling up and mainstreaming them and making them economically viable and competitive with the linear and fossil based business models. Taking into account external costs by giving value to natural capital and applying environmental performance indicators are the missing links. We need the political courage to organize a systemic shift, by exploring the option of a UN Convention on Natural Resources Management. Such framework should set a **common objective** to achieve the SDG's, with SDG 12 as the umbrella goal. It should contain **common targets and timelines** on resource efficiency, to have a common understanding where we are heading for. It should establish a **monitoring, reporting and verification system**, to be able to assess where we are. Digitalisation, tracers for material flows, symbiosis platforms,... are important tools in this. Last but not least, **action plans at all levels** (global, national and local) should be part of the framework.

A draft of this statement was presented to the participants in the closing session and suggestions and comments received within two weeks after the closing have been incorporated. The next World Resources Forum will be held in Geneva, October 22-24, 2019.