

KEYNOTE SPEECH BY THE PRINCIPAL SECRETARY DR CHRIS KIPTOO, CBS DURING THE KARA BI-MONTHLY TALK SERIES ON TUESDAY 8TH JUNE 2021 FROM 4.00-5.30PM.

TOPIC: CIRCULAR ECONOMY APPROACH TO WASTE MANAGEMENT IN KENYA: OPPORTUNITIES, BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. Firstly, let me thank KARA for giving me an opportunity to address this forum on the subject of “Circular economy approach to waste management in Kenya: Opportunities, benefits and challenges”.
2. This discussion comes at a time when the world has experienced the COVID 19 disruption that has affected social economic and environmental tenets of development. COVID 19 crisis has brought to the fore discussions regarding our unsustainable consumption and production as well as waste disposal as a threat to human health, prosperity and equity.
3. Kenya’s waste management approach has been linear whereby all waste is mixed together and destined for dumpsites. Studies show that what is dumped is 60% organic, 30% recyclables and 10% others. The linear model coupled with increasing population, low public awareness and consumer perception of waste has resulted in massive environmental pollution by waste.
4. Circular economy provides an opportunity to reverse this trend through reduction, re-use and recycling. Circular economy provides for enhanced value extraction from resources and can turn economies around by ensuring optimal resource use with minimal demand for virgin raw materials and reduced pollution. This ideal is the basis of the Paris Agreement climate change aspirations towards a below 1.5 degree temperature moderation. Kenya has already domesticated these aspirations in the just concluded Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) recently submitted to the UNFCCC.
5. Circular economy concept has been integrated in several policy and legislative initiatives in Kenya which includes the following:
 - a. The ban on single-use plastic bags nationally in February 2017. The ban promoted the use of alternative bags that are less harmful to the environment after end of life.
 - b. The ban on the use of single-use plastics in protected areas in June 2019 which enhanced pollution control within our protected areas. This ban is in force and our protected areas are now cleaner.
 - c. The Sustainable Waste Management Policy and Bill (2020), which was approved by Cabinet on 25th February proposes a transition from linear to circular economy. The Policy and Bill also includes provisions

for the development of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes. Enabling a circular economy and environmentally sustainable use through extended producer responsibility, life-cycle assessment, reuse and recycling of waste in Kenya is a very fundamental shift.

- d. The draft EPR regulation (2021) calls upon the producers to ensure their products and packaging are reusable and recyclable as well as embrace ecological life cycle.
 - e. The Ministry has finalized development of 2 sets of curricula to promote circular economy for environmental journalists and a Training of trainers' curriculum for waste service providers. The Ministry is now in the process of rolling out the curriculum.
 - f. The Ministry has developed an advocacy, public awareness and communication strategy on circular economy which will be rolled out in June 2021. The program will make use of diverse media platforms and strategies to reach out to the public on circular economy.
 - g. The Ministry is also developing a framework to accelerate transition of business to green growth and circular economy in Kenya. This initiative was motivated by the realization that some businesses in Kenya have made efforts to be environmentally friendly, have adopted circular models, and resource efficiency initiatives such as energy and water audits, but the progress made is still at small scale and is not sufficient to cause socio-economic and structural transformation. The framework is designed to help private sector to go green and embrace the circular economy framework through the involvement of businesses, enterprises and citizens to reach the targets of zero waste, zero emissions and enhanced material recycling practices.
6. Circular economy advocates for a rethink of the resources in our disposal to derive optimum benefits and avoid wastage. There is realization that there are many players within the value chain each benefitting from a fraction of the resource. Hence circular economy benefits go beyond employment, money, livelihoods, attitude and social transformation.
7. For instance, the Sustainable Waste Management Policy and Bill proposes establishment and strengthening of the following value chains each with a capacity to employ many Kenyans:-
- a. Waste segregation at source into various fractions – households can sell these fractions and earn income.
 - b. Material transfer Facilities (MRFs) – Receives segregated waste for further segregation. These MRFs will be managed by local community and will be expected to sell the waste and hence earn income.

- c. Reuse facilities – This is where used items will undergo refurbishment and sold for reuse.
 - d. Waste transportation – Since waste will be segregated, more vehicles will be engaged for the different waste fractions implying more jobs.
 - e. Composting facilities – will receive the organic waste and make organic fertilizer to be sold to farmers.
 - f. Recycling facilities – will be expanded to cover every waste stream and supported through the Extended Producer Responsibility Schemes. They are expected to employ many people.
 - g. Sanitary landfill that will be responsible for safe disposal of 5% of waste that cannot be recycled or reused.
8. Circular economy hence diversifies the value chains leading to more benefits to communities and people.
9. Some of the challenges facing the transition to circular economy include:-
- a. Most of these initiatives and policies have been primarily driven by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry. Circular economy is a broader horizontal and cross-cutting concept applicable in many aspects of the economy and society.
 - b. Inadequate public awareness and linear attitude among key players in sustainable development initiatives.
 - c. Inadequate infrastructure to support circular economy operationalization.
 - d. Very few existing policies support transition to circular economy.
 - e. Inadequate technical, technological and financial resources to support circular economy.
10. As I conclude, I wish to reiterate that circularity and sustainable consumption and production are essential to assist Kenya deliver on its commitments in multilateral agreements. They will help us use our resources optimally while reducing our waste and environmental pollution footprint.
11. A new national circular economy policy and action plan will incentivize innovative designs for circularity and extended product life, and establish infrastructure for entire natural resource management including waste management and recycling.
12. We have already developed some policy and legislative enablers and are committed to reflect and upscale policy and legislative interventions on our transition to circular economy.

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