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Gisa MUGANWA

PhD Student, West Ukrainian National University

Iryna ZVARYCH

Doctor of Economic Sciences, Professor, Head of International Economics Department, West Ukrainian National University

SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY IN AFRICA

In Africa, 125 million tonnes of municipal solid waste have been generated in 2012. According to the UNEP's Africa Waste Management Outlook, Africa only recycles 4 per cent of its waste. About 90 per cent is disposed of on land, often in uncontrolled dumpsites, while the rest is being unaccounted for. The report urges African countries to find innovative solutions to address its waste management challenges and to prepare for the expected growth in waste generation on the continent, expected to double by 2025.

During the 17th Ministerial session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment in Durban, South Africa in 2019, a regional framework on circular

economy was proposed, to focus on contextualizing the circular economy to the needs of African countries. Circular Economy approaches is part of Africa's transformative efforts to sustainable development. Switch Africa Green programme already promotes circularity approaches such as the promotion of biogas technology, e-waste management, promoting organic agriculture, green manufacturing and eco-industrial park and standards and labelling in the hotel industry, among others. It is important that the lessons learned, and knowledge acquired is shared among countries for regional harmonization of policies to ensure maximum impact and effective implementation at national level. SWITCH Africa Green programme works with Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, South Africa and Uganda to achieve sustainable development by engaging in transition towards an inclusive green economy, based on sustainable consumption and production patterns.

For African countries, circular solutions can be leveraged to attain various climate action obligations and sustainable development goals. This is an opportunity to tackle issues such as poverty, poor infrastructure and unemployment, among others that have hindered economic development.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment facing the African continent. Globally, COVID-19 has affected more than 1.6 billion informal workers and small, medium and micro enterprises, mostly in developing countries, with women being the most affected. The pandemic-induced recession has drained resources and disrupted supply chains, hindering trade in commodities on which African economies rely.

In addition, the effects of climate change have compounded the health and economic impacts of COVID-19. Africa has been hit by extreme weather events, putting a strain on already fragile safety nets and infrastructure. Countries now spend between 2% and 9% of their GDP in response to climate-related events such as floods, droughts and landslides. There is a unique opportunity to rebuild green and resilient post-COVID-19 economies across the continent. Putting in place the right circular economy initiatives and policies will support the recovery and trigger new market opportunities.

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