



WORLD GREEN ECONOMY
ORGANIZATION



Green Circle

Accelerating the Transition to Responsible Business

White Paper



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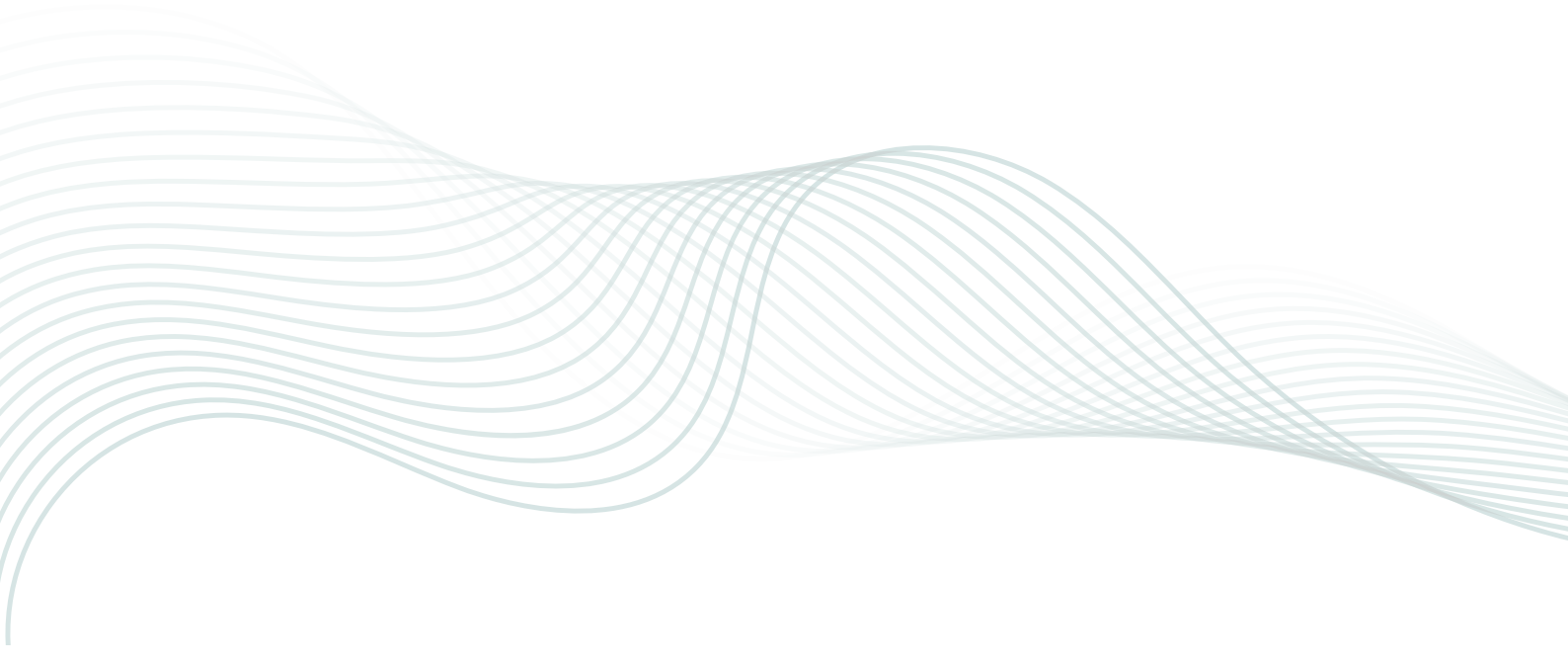
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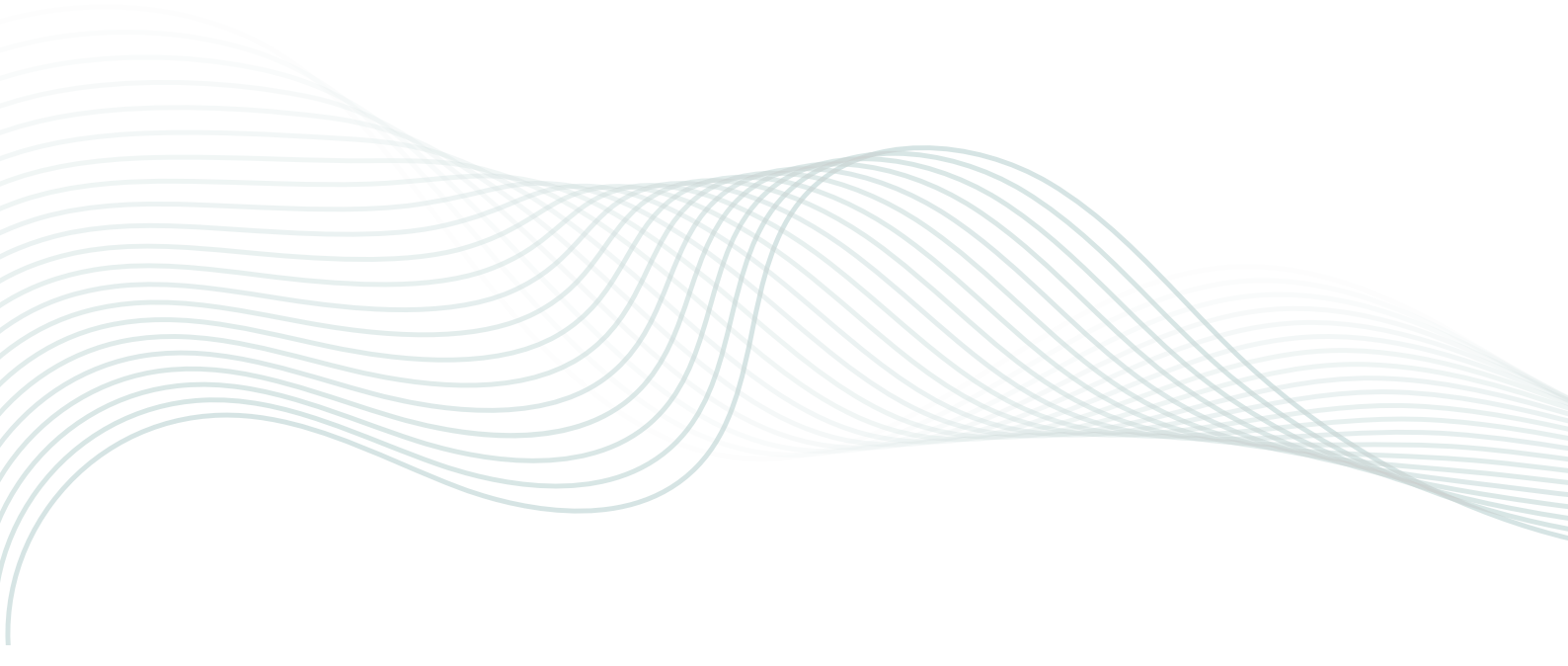
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About **WGEO**

The World Green Economy Organization (WGEO) was launched during the 2016 World Green Economy Summit under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, and Ruler of Dubai. WGEO operates as a global platform to accelerate the transition towards a green economy by forging partnerships between the public and private sectors, international organisations, and civil society.

The work of the organisation spans policy innovation, capacity building, and cross-sector collaboration to promote the widespread adoption of green economy principles and practices. The strategic areas of focus can be summarized as follows:



Policy Advisory

Supporting governments and institutions in shaping policies that enable climate-resilient, low-emission development pathways.



Green Finance

Facilitating access to finance and investment opportunities that align with ESG principles and sustainable outcomes.



Capacity Building

Delivering training programmes and leadership platforms to upskill individuals and institutions across the green economy value chain.



Innovation & Partnerships

Accelerating the deployment of cutting-edge green technologies through cross-sector collaboration and public-private initiatives.

By fostering practical cooperation between institutions and governments, WGEO aims to unlock opportunities for green growth while addressing the complexities of challenges faced by the global community. Over the years, WGEO has collaborated with leading multilateral organisations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), and Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), along with other government entities, development banks, and corporate partners. These efforts are accelerated through initiatives such as the Global Green Innovation Initiative (GGII) and the Global Alliance on Green Economy (GAGE) with a focus on scaling innovative technologies and building capacity for green investments. These combined efforts are grounded in the fundamental belief that the green economy is not simply a dream, but a reality driven by a transformative mindset.



The Green Circles reflect WGEO's commitment to accelerating the global green transition through unified, inclusive action. By convening governments, businesses, and communities, we catalyze policy innovation, mobilize strategic investments, and enable measurable climate solutions. Together, we are shaping a sustainable future grounded in equity, resilience, and shared prosperity.



AbdulRahim Sultan

Director General,
World Green Economy
Organization

About Green Circle

The Green Circle conceptualized by WGEO is a premier high-level event strategically designed to convene influential leaders across private sector, government, academia, and civil society to accelerate progress towards a green economy. Beyond the conventional, the Green Circle is a catalytic platform for unlocking bold ideas, aligning on shared sustainability priorities, and co-creating actionable pathways towards a responsible and inclusive future.

At its core, the Green Circle breaks down formalities and hierarchies to enable candid, forward-looking exchange. Held without speeches or panel structures, each session is curated to give participants an equal voice, a deliberate shift from transactional forums to transformational dialogue.

With a focus on practical outcomes, each Green Circle culminates in the development of a strategic White Paper, consolidating key takeaways, sector insights, and policy-aligned recommendations that contribute to global green economy discourse.

The inaugural Green Circle held on 22nd May 2025 at the DEWA Sustainability & Innovation Centre, was convened in collaboration with AmCham Dubai and brought together C-suite executives, global sustainability experts, and ecosystem enablers to explore the evolving role of responsible business. Framed around four thematic pillars - Strategy, Technology, Partnerships, and Policy. The session marked the beginning of a recurring series that aims to build long-term alignment and momentum across the green economy ecosystem.



Hosting partner **AmCham Dubai**

The American Business Council of Dubai and the Northern Emirates is the first bilateral trade organisation established in the UAE. It represents a diverse network of leading American and international businesses operating across multiple sectors within the region. AmCham Dubai plays a vital role in strengthening the US-UAE business corridor through advocacy, thought leadership, and business partnerships that support responsible enterprise and innovation-led growth.



Our collaboration with WGEO through the Green Circles initiative and the active engagement of AmCham Dubai's Sustainability & ESG Committee reflects a shared commitment to advancing responsible business. This partnership is not a single moment—it's an evolving platform that brings together the voice of American business in support of the UAE's sustainability and ESG priorities. Together, we're turning alignment into action and building momentum for lasting impact.



Cara Nazari
CEO, American Chamber
of Commerce in Dubai

Executive Summary

As the world accelerates toward a net-zero, inclusive, and innovation-led future, responsible business has become more than a moral imperative – it is a strategic necessity. The inaugural Green Circle at the DEWA Sustainability and Innovation Centre in Dubai, convened senior leaders across the public and private sectors to reimagine the role of business in shaping a sustainable global economy.

Organised by the World Green Economy Organization (WGEO) in collaboration with AmCham Dubai, the session was designed as an open, non-hierarchical dialogue that enabled C-level industry leaders to exchange insights, challenge assumptions, and explore new pathways to action.

The discussion revolved around four interlinked themes:



Redefining Business in the Transition Era

Emphasising the need to move ESG from a reporting function to a value-creation engine embedded in governance, operations, and culture



Technology as a Transition Accelerator

Highlighting the role of responsible innovation to drive scalable impact, improve transparency, and reshape sectors.



Partnerships for a Just and Green Future

Calling for inclusive, cross-sectoral coalitions grounded in the principles of shared purpose, equity, and measurable outcomes.



Policy for a Transitioning Economy

Exploring the role of proactive ESG-aligned regulation to create enabling environments that de-risk innovation and reward sustainable leadership.

The discussions pointed directly towards the understanding that the business case for sustainability is no longer theoretical. The next decade will belong to organisations that embed purpose at the heart of performance, champion inclusive innovation, and collaborate across boundaries to solve complex challenges. This white paper serves as both a reflection of these insights and a strategic instrument to guide future policymaking, business strategy, and multi-sector collaboration in the journey towards responsible and regenerative growth.



Redefining Business in the Transition Era – Making ESG Core to Strategy, Value, and Impact



Overview

As global markets experience increasing pressure to respond to climate change, social equity, and regulatory complexity – Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles are rapidly moving from the periphery of corporate strategy to its core. What was once a reporting function is now being recognised as a strategic enabler for innovation, competitiveness, and long-term resilience.

However, the shift is not uniform across all realms. Many organisations continue to treat ESG as a standalone initiative, disconnected from decision-making and value creation. During the Green Circle dialogue, participants explored the conditions required to embed ESG into business models at a foundational level—where purpose and profit are not in conflict but in intrinsic alignment. These reflections were anchored in questions posed at the outset of the discussion:

- *What organisational shifts are most effective in moving ESG from a reporting function to a business driver?*
- *How can businesses quantify and communicate non-financial value such as environmental and social impact?*

Discussion Insights

ESG needs boardroom commitment and business line ownership

ESG integration begins when sustainability becomes a boardroom priority, tied directly to executive KPIs and accountability frameworks. Multiple participants underscored that ESG integration gains real traction when accountability starts at the top and cascades across business functions. For example, a leading company restructured their governance model by placing sustainability leads in each business unit to meet rising ESG expectations in public tenders, especially around biodiversity and hydrogen-readiness. Another firm noted how executive compensation tied to ESG KPIs accelerates internal change, with CFOs now leading monthly ESG reviews.

Moving beyond the department to build organisation wide capabilities

Embedding sustainability requires shifting ESG from a compliance team to a company-wide culture of ownership and transparency. The roundtable highlighted a shift from ESG being housed within siloed departments to becoming a capability embedded across procurement, HR, finance, and operations. At a particular firm, this shift was materialised through a “Green Skills Report”, mapping employee capabilities and aligning workforce training with sustainability objectives. This underscores that ESG must become part of employee development, not just corporate communications.

ESG as a strategic asset and not a cost centre

Speakers made a compelling case for viewing ESG as a value driver. A climate tech advisor cited a mining firm that leveraged blockchain for ESG traceability, leading to a \$300 million uptick in revenue and a contract with a domain leader. By turning compliance into a competitive advantage, ESG moves from cost to catalyst enhancing shareholder value and market differentiation.

Public commitments drive internal change

Making ESG ambitions public often compels faster execution. The carbon-neutrality goal of a leading firm by 2040, catalysed operational upgrades and enabled customer-facing tools that quantify emissions per shipment. Such transparency builds external trust while sharpening internal focus.

Communicating non-financial value strengthens brand equity

Employee wellbeing, brand trust, and climate preparedness are now core components of enterprise value. A representative shared how ESG affects employee engagement and talent acquisition within their organisation. By embedding sustainability in 98% of R&D projects, this firm boosts employee pride and attracts candidates who care about purpose-driven companies. Meanwhile, other firms linked ESG to community initiatives and safety metrics using relatable stories such as volunteer hours or incident-free days to quantify social capital.

Case Study Spotlight

Procter & Gamble – Embedding ESG into Product and Packaging Innovation

Procter & Gamble has integrated ESG across its operations by embedding sustainability into product development, packaging innovation, and workforce alignment. Through its “Ambition 2030” initiative, P&G has committed to making 100% of its packaging recyclable or reusable, while reducing virgin plastic use by 50%. This shift is underpinned by governance structures that link ESG goals to brand teams and R&D units. Notably, P&G’s Circular Packaging Innovation Lab actively collaborates with suppliers and local recyclers to close material loops, demonstrating how ESG-led transformation can align environmental goals with core business strategy and market differentiation.

Key Takeaways

- ESG must evolve from a peripheral reporting activity to a central business driver.
- Sustainability leadership begins with governance, ownership, and culture.
- Strategic ESG implementation enables resilience, growth, and stakeholder trust.
- High-impact ESG metrics must be outcome-oriented and tied to value creation.
- Businesses that align purpose and performance are better equipped for the future economy.

Technology as a Transition Accelerator – Leveraging Innovation to Drive Scalable and Inclusive Solutions



Overview

Technology is rapidly reshaping the sustainability landscape by providing tools that help businesses optimise resource use, improve transparency, and design smarter, more inclusive systems. From AI-powered climate modelling to blockchain-enabled supply chains, innovation is no longer a choice but a necessity for companies navigating the green transition.

However, the pace of technological advancement often outstrips regulatory frameworks, workforce capabilities, and ethical safeguards. In the Green Circle dialogue, participants reflected on how innovation can serve as both a lever and a litmus test for corporate responsibility to evaluate which systems must be in place to scale solutions meaningfully. These reflections were anchored in questions posed at the outset of the discussion:

- *What technologies and digital tools are proving most effective in supporting ESG implementation and impact tracking?*
- *What conditions are needed to scale these tools across large and small organisations?*

Discussion Insights

Innovation requires more than technology upgrades

Technology should be deployed with a clear sustainability purpose—not as a tool for efficiency alone, but as a catalyst for systems changes. Technology does not solely drive innovation; it must be championed from the top and enabled through the elements of systemic support such as leadership, culture and incentives. A leading organization highlighted that innovation scales when it becomes a leadership value, reinforced by incentives, training programmes, and digital infrastructure. Their success in linking young engineers with sustainability projects demonstrates how embedding innovation into organisational DNA rather than assigning it to a single department produces tangible ESG outcomes.

Open standards enable scale and reduce exclusion

ESG tech is only as effective as the governance systems around it. Participants noted that many ESG tools fail to scale because they are built for isolated ecosystems. In the built environment, mandating open protocols in procurement was found to encourage broader participation by smaller vendors. This shift toward interoperability not only invites more solution providers but also enables local SMEs to compete. Without open standards and accountability, ESG tools risk deepening existing digital inequities.

Private sector must actively bridge the funding–adoption gap

A recurring challenge was the limited availability of funding for cleantech ventures in the region. While companies often pilot ESG innovations, they struggle to scale due to lack of venture capital, supportive procurement and established auditing services to validate credibility within the sustainability domain. Promising tools developed locally are frequently overlooked until they gain traction in foreign markets. This "wait-for-validation" mindset stifles regional innovation. Participants called for stronger public-private funding mechanisms and local proof-of-concept adoption.

Digital inclusion must be designed into ESG ecosystems

Platforms must be interoperable across functions, sectors, and geographies. One participant called for an "Amazon for ESG solutions", a centralised marketplace to match corporate problems with emerging solutions. Participants also stressed that unless reporting systems become simpler and more inclusive, sustainability will remain an elite agenda. Startups and SMEs are often excluded from ESG tech ecosystems due to the lack of clean, centralised data and large compliance budgets. However, green technologies need to be accessible for SMEs, underserved communities, and non-digital sectors to ensure equitable adoption.

Behavioural change is as critical as technical implementation

Tools cannot drive transformation in isolation, they must be embedded within business culture and decision-making. Several organisations shared that ESG tech projects fail not due to faulty technology but due to poor adoption. A representative from a leading firm recounted an AI-powered ESG data tool that underperformed, since employees lacked the know-how to interpret its outputs. Others noted that many firms underutilise the tools they already have in place. Technology must be paired with digital literacy and embedded into everyday decision-making to be effective.

Case Study Spotlight

Milwaukee Tool – Linking Tools, Tech, and Climate Goals

Milwaukee Tool, in partnership with Tree-Nation, has launched a carbon offset programme where every tool sold contributes to reforestation projects. While modest in scale, the initiative reflects a growing trend where product ecosystems are aligned with emissions reduction strategies. By integrating offset calculations directly into the supply chain, Milwaukee Tool demonstrates how even traditional manufacturing sectors can digitise ESG accountability. The programme's success lies not only in the number of trees planted, but in how it engages customers, tracks CO₂ metrics, and translates purchase behaviour into environmental impact creating a tech-enabled bridge between operations and climate action.

Key Takeaways

- Innovation must serve long-term sustainability goals, not short-term gains.
- Responsible technology deployment requires robust governance and ethical design.
- Scalable ESG tech must be inclusive, accessible, and interoperable.
- Behavioural change and culture are critical to tech adoption and impact.
- Technology is not a silver bullet—it is a multiplier when integrated intentionally.

Partnerships for a Just and Green Future

Building Coalitions for Scalable, Inclusive, and Measurable Impact



Overview

Sustainability can no longer be achieved through the pursuit of an individual entity. The complexity and urgency of global challenges mandate cross-sectoral partnerships that move beyond transactional collaborations to strategic and long-term coalitions. True progress demands collective intelligence, shared resources, and co-ownership of outcomes.

The Green Circle session explored how the private sector can play a central role in building inclusive ecosystems that scale sustainability across value chains. Participants emphasised the need for partnerships that are measurable, mutually accountable, and aligned with systemic transformation. These reflections were anchored in questions posed at the outset of the discussion:

- *What types of cross-sectoral collaborations have led to measurable ESG outcomes?*
- *How can partnerships be structured to ensure the meaningful inclusion of youth, SMEs, and underrepresented groups?*
- *What role can chambers of commerce and trade associations play in catalysing collective action?*

Discussion Insights

Partnership agreements must be designed for delivery and not visibility

Effective collaboration starts with a shared mission and a clearly defined theory of change, rather than branding or compliance objectives. It must be purpose driven. Several participants expressed fatigue with partnerships that exist in press releases but lack follow-through. As one speaker noted, “What we do not need is another MoU. What we do need is shared risk, shared investment, and shared outcomes.” Effective partnerships are built and sustained by transparency, aligned incentives, and shared accountability that go beyond symbolic alignment. In other words, trust is the currency.

Partnering with SMEs accelerates local resilience

Equity is a design principle. Youth, SMEs, and under-represented stakeholders must be intentionally included at the design stage not as a checkbox, but as true innovation partners. Speakers advocated for forming coalitions that integrate local SMEs into the green economy through supplier inclusion, joint innovation pilots, and capacity-building initiatives. One company described co-designing a pitch platform with an SME incubator, giving startups direct access to their procurement team. This not only supported innovation but localised value creation, key to climate and economic resilience.

Community-anchored partnerships sustain long-term impact

Partnerships rooted in community engagement, particularly with youth were highlighted as critical to shifting mindsets. Insights from youth-focused programmes showed that when sustainability education includes parents, teachers, and mentors, the effects ripple through social norms and purchasing behaviour. Cross-generational partnerships, where students work alongside corporate and government mentors, were recommended as a scalable model for inclusive transition. In areas like decarbonisation, circular economy, and data-sharing, companies can achieve more by working together than in isolation.

Chambers and trade groups must move from forums to facilitators

Participants emphasised that business chambers play a catalytic role not just by convening events, but by consolidating the voice of the private sector into actionable advocacy. As shared by the leadership of the organisation, the ESG Committee of such chambers exemplifies how volunteer-led business groups can co-create sustainable initiatives which accelerate the transition. Business councils must evolve into matchmakers connecting corporates, regulators, and capital across sectors to operationalise sustainability goals.

Inclusion is shared power – not just participation

The session made clear that inviting diverse voices is no longer enough. One participant noted that true inclusion requires co-ownership, not tokenism. Examples included youth advisory boards with budget control and KPIs, women-led innovation cohorts, and SME engagement in procurement dialogues. These structures ensure that underrepresented groups influence the agenda, not simply comment on it.

Case Study Spotlight

General Motors – Driving Community Impact through Local Partnerships

In collaboration with Emirates Foundation’s SANID programme, General Motors implemented a community outreach campaign to raise awareness around electric mobility. The initiative combined technical training with public education, targeting youth groups, volunteers, and community centres across the UAE. By partnering with a local volunteer platform, GM demonstrated how corporates can localise global sustainability goals like electrification into context-specific impact. The programme exemplifies how partnerships anchored in community engagement can enhance ESG visibility while creating long-term behavioural shifts.

Key Takeaways

- Strategic partnerships must move from intention to shared implementation.
- Inclusion of SMEs, youth, and local communities enriches innovation and legitimacy.
- Trade groups can amplify action through standard-setting and collective accountability.
- Transparent and equitable partnerships outlast symbolic collaborations.
- Systems change requires coalitions that are built to scale and sustained by trust.

Policy for a Transitioning Economy – Designing the Next Generation of ESG-Ready Regulatory Frameworks



Overview

Policy is a powerful lever for accelerating the green transition—but only when it evolves in step with business innovation and market dynamics. As sustainability becomes a business imperative, outdated regulatory frameworks risk becoming bottlenecks rather than enablers.

Participants at the Green Circle emphasised that the next generation of policies must be proactive, not reactive—designed to incentivise progress, reduce compliance complexity, and integrate ESG principles across all sectors. The public and private sectors must co-create regulatory environments that reward innovation, foster inclusivity, and scale measurable impact. These reflections were anchored in questions posed at the outset of the discussion:

- *What policy shifts are most urgently needed to support the ESG transformation in the private sector?*
- *What types of regulatory incentives (financial or otherwise) can accelerate ESG adoption across industries?*
- *How can governments work collaboratively with the private sector to develop ESG-aligned policies that are both practical and ambitious?*

Discussion Insights

Policy must be future-fit and evolve with business requirements

Participants called for dynamic regulatory frameworks that respond to business realities without creating volatility. This involves anticipating emerging ESG risks and opportunities to enable innovation while ensuring accountability. A common frustration expressed was the inconsistency of policy updates: "We do not need rewrites, we need evolution." Frequent overhauls confuse compliance efforts, especially for multinational companies trying to align with both UAE and global standards. Businesses are looking for "convergence roadmaps" that clearly map local laws to frameworks like CSRD, TCFD, or ISSB to reduce compliance friction.

Harmonisation and ease of entry are essential

Businesses operating across borders need coherence between local, regional, and global ESG requirements to streamline compliance and reporting. Additionally, SMEs need simpler ESG entry points. Complex ESG documentation and lack of multilingual platforms are excluding SMEs. A representative from the SME Association shared that ESG documentation processes (e.g., 40-page forms in English) are deal-breakers for many smaller firms. Participants suggested the development of lightweight verification tools such as mobile-friendly apps or pre-qualified vendor registries to help local businesses participate meaningfully in ESG-aligned procurement.

Incentives drive momentum

Governments should ideally offer fiscal and non-financial incentives such as green procurement, fast-track approvals, or tax credits to reward sustainable innovation. Policy should not only regulate poor behaviour but also reward leadership. Participants recommended tax relief tied to verified ESG outcomes, fast-track approvals for certified suppliers, and training credits to reward compliance. These “carrots” make it financially viable for companies, especially SMEs to adopt sustainable practices without the fear of being left behind.

Co-design of policy with the private sector improves implementation

Policymaking must shift from top-down mandates to co-creation with businesses, SMEs, and civil society. Multiple voices stressed that regulators and business leaders need to be in the same room consistently, not once a year. Public-private ESG taskforces, with quarterly engagement, were proposed to co-develop frameworks that reflect business realities and avoid unintended consequences. Co-design creates shared ownership of both the problem and the solution.

Public procurement can shape markets faster than mandates

Several participants pointed out that the fastest route to ESG adoption is not regulation, but demand particularly through government procurement. Strong enforcement, monitoring, and feedback loops are still critical, but public tenders that integrate ESG metrics can shift entire markets. This strategy incentivises suppliers to prioritise sustainable design, disclosure, and innovation. The insight was best captured by one comment: “The green economy will not take off unless public procurement demands it.”

Case Study Spotlight

UAE’s Regulatory Shift Towards ESG Disclosure

In recent years, the UAE has emerged as a regional frontrunner in embedding ESG principles into policy and regulation. The UAE Securities and Commodities Authority (SCA) has mandated ESG disclosures for all listed companies, aligning national standards with global frameworks such as the GRI and TCFD. Additionally, initiatives like the Dubai Sustainable Finance Working Group and ADGM’s Sustainable Finance Agenda demonstrate a whole-of-government approach to mainstreaming ESG into capital markets, governance structures, and corporate accountability. The UAE’s policy direction is reinforced by clear timelines, cross-sector engagement, and regulatory sandboxes that support innovation, providing a replicable model for other emerging markets.

Key Takeaways

- ESG-ready regulation must be anticipatory, agile, and innovation-friendly.
- Policy coherence across jurisdictions enhances business confidence and compliance.
- Incentives and procurement levers can drive private sector commitment to ESG.
- Collaborative policy design improves relevance, uptake, and impact.
- Strong implementation and monitoring systems are key to lasting transformation.

Conclusion

The inaugural Green Circle served as a powerful reminder that responsible business is no longer a niche commitment; it is a defining feature of competitiveness, resilience, and leadership for the next decade. Through open and strategic dialogue, participants unpacked the elements needed to embed sustainability at the core of business models, partnerships, innovation, and policy. While each thematic pillar uncovered unique perspectives, a few cross-cutting insights consistently emerged:

Leadership and governance are foundational

Whether shaping ESG strategy, deploying technology, or influencing policy, success depends on executive ownership, cultural alignment, and clearly defined accountability.

Inclusion enhances outcomes

Youth, SMEs, and underserved groups are not just stakeholders—they are innovation drivers. Equitable design must become standard, not symbolic.

Technology transforms decision making

Technology must be purpose-driven, inclusive, and embedded in decision-making systems. Data alone is not impact. Innovation must translate into action, investment, and long-term sustainability transformation.

Partnership is no longer optional

No organisation, government, or sector could potentially solve systemic challenges in isolation. Coalitions are essential to achieve scalable solutions.

Policy must be enabling and future-ready

Governments and businesses must co-create ESG-aligned frameworks that reward ambition while simplifying implementation.

As a platform, the Green Circle is designed not simply to exchange ideas, but to accelerate alignment and action. This white paper offers a synthesis of key insights that can inform business strategy, influence policy design, and inspire future dialogues across the region and beyond.

The journey toward responsible business is not a destination—it is a shared commitment to rethinking value, leadership, and growth for the world ahead.



Initiative by
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