UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM STAFF COLLEGE

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ONLINE

09 NOV 2026 - 18 DEC 2026

Circular Economy and the 2030 Agenda

Change and transformationClimate and Environment
Stakeholder engagement and partnerships
Sustainable development and the SDGs



LANGUAGE
English

DURATION
6 weeks

ENROLL BY
14 May 2026

PRICE
Free

LOCATION
ONLINE

TARGET
Everyone

CONTACT sustainable-development@unssc.org

This course will not be offered in 2026. While there is no edition scheduled this year, we encourage interested participants to check this page for updates on future dates and learning opportunities.

This engaging six-week online course will focus on harnessing circular economy principles and systems-based approaches to explore ways in which we can redesign our systems, products and services to allow us to achieve sustainable living for all, within planetary limits.

Introduction

This course explores the application of Circular Economy (CE) practices in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

With less than a decade to 2030, it is evident that 'business as usual' will not help us to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Systems-based approaches along with a strong commitment to deep-rooted transformations and actions are vital to the reduction of humanity's footprint on our planet. Our resources are finite and the principles and practices of the circular economy will be catalytic in creating goods, processes and ecosystems that are restorative and regenerative by design.

The course will focus on 'how' and 'why' circular economy principles will be critical to achieving the goal of the 2030 Agenda - sustainable development for all.

Theoretical, practical and case study-based approaches will be used to illustrate and support the concepts. The course will be strongly application-based, with numerous real-life examples from around the world, and will include tools useful to advance CE practices. Participants will get the opportunity to engage with distinguished experts through live webinars. Assignments, exercises, quizzes and peer sharing across the different modules of the course will benefit the participants and add to their learning.

This course has been created in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme.

Objectives

Upon the successful completion of this course, participants will be able to:

- Understand the interconnection between Circular Economy and its potential in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Explain the importance of systems-based approaches to identify effective circular transformations and apply different models of circularity to identify opportunities for circular transformations.
- Understand the opportunities to drive circular value across the life cycles of products and processes and examine business models that could support circularity.
- Explore the policy environments that support the successful application of circular strategies to cities and examine why citizens can play a crucial role in ensuring circularity.
- Recognize the potential of individual actions and sustainable lifestyles in enabling circularity
- Identify the barriers and enablers to mainstreaming circular strategies.

Course methodology

UNSSC online courses are designed to deliver maximum learning outcomes through optimal time investments into carefully chosen high-quality learning materials. Specially tailored to the needs of the professional interested in developing skills to advance their career or deepening their knowledge on a particular subject, our facilitated online courses combine self-paced study modules with applied learning components such as case studies, interactive exercises and collaborative group work.

Participants also benefit from live moderated webinars which feature valuable inputs from renowned subject matter experts, and allow real-time dialogue with high-level speakers. Webinar recordings are also made available to ensure that participants have a flexible and seamless learning experience.

An expert facilitator guides and assists the participants throughout the course, and provides real-time feedback on activities and exercises. Our user-friendly social online learning platform provides participants with the opportunity to connect with peers from diverse organizational backgrounds, fostering peer-to-peer learning.

While being interactive and participatory, UNSSC online courses give learners the opportunity to complete activities when it best fits their schedule. Participants are largely free to determine their own weekly study plan. Lasting six weeks and demanding six hours of work a week, UNSSC online courses incorporate the same high academic rigour as any UNSSC face-to-face programme.

Course contents

Week 1 will introduce key features of the 2030 Agenda, explain the evolution of the concept and principles of Circular Economy and explain the importance of the need to transition from a linear to a circular system in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

Week 2 will establish the need for a systems-based approach to circular economy. It will discuss the Butterfly diagram and the Circularity diagram as strategic tools for circular design and understand their operational principles through technical and biological cycles of products and resources with the help of real-life case studies. It will consider the need for systemic enabling environments supported by appropriate policies for circularity.

Week 3 will explore how to make businesses more circular, applying CE principles to business products and processes and examining innovative business models and relationships as well as policy environments that could support circularity in business.

Week 4 will focus on designing circular cities by illustrating the potential of CE principles to create sustainable and thriving urban living environments.

Week 5 will examine the impact of more sustainable lifestyle choices on the world around us and finding ways for everyone to live better and lighter.

Week 6 will analyse the key barriers and enablers to increasing the adoption of CE principles and processes. It will reiterate the importance of a systemic approach to circular economy to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

Target audience

Policymakers and policy shapers from the multilateral sector and government, members of the private sector and civil society who would like to help accelerate the transition towards circular systems by applying circular economy principles in policymaking, production and consumption practices, businesses and cities.

Cost of participation

UNSSC fosters collaborative peer-to-peer learning among its course participants. To achieve this, UNSSC adopts a rigorous methodology in its selection process that considers the course's scope, objectives, and expected outcomes. UNSSC utilizes specific selection criteria for its course participants to promote cohort-based learning and increase course impact. Interested individuals are encouraged to sign up for the moderated online course and be **ready to complete an additional comprehensive selection survey** after the course registration closes.

Selection criteria:

The selection criteria include quality of motivation, professional experience and knowledge, commitment, diversity (gender, geographic region, sector, etc.), and willingness to contribute to the course.

Selection process:

1. Register for the course by clicking on the sign-up button. **Please provide a clear motivation statement and a short explanation of the benefit you can derive from the course as well as your possible contribution to enriching it.**
2. After the deadline for registration, you will receive a link to a survey to confirm the necessary conditions for course completion (technical requirements and time availability), as well as to answer course specific questions.

This online course is offered free-of-charge.

Participants will enjoy the following benefits from the free online course:

- 3-months access to course materials (incl. exclusive video material and key readings), recording of webinars and speakers' presentations.
- Participation in live webinars with renowned subject matter experts.
- Exclusive access to the UNSSC online social learning environment with training and supporting background materials, and the opportunity to stay connected with colleagues.

Certificates from the United Nations System Staff College will be awarded to participants upon completion of the course.