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EXPO 2020



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For Immediate Release: All spokespeople and speakers are available for interview upon request

## Finland at Expo 2020 Dubai experts believe the circular economy is emerging as a global mega-trend

On October 31, 2021, as part of Finland's official Expo 2020 Dubai national day programme and celebrations, the [Finland Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai](#) hosted a circular economy forum to address the importance of adopting a circular economy to combat the current climate crisis the world is facing. During the forum, speakers including Ville Skinnari, Minister for Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade of Finland and Her Excellency Dr Nawal Al-Hosany, Permanent Representative of the UAE to the [International Renewable Energy Agency](#), shared their expertise and provided insights into how countries could adopt more circular economy practices to reach ambitious sustainability goals. They highlighted the vital need for stakeholder collaboration, innovation and digital solutions, and investment in sustainable education if countries are to successfully transition to a circular economy model.

According to the [Circularity Gap Report 2021](#) prepared by [Circle Economy](#), only 8.6 per cent of the world economy is circular. Finland has been a pioneer in circular economy solutions. In 2016, the country launched the world's first [national circular economy roadmap](#) under the leadership of the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra. This roadmap provides a detailed strategy for Finland's stakeholders and citizens to transition to a circular economy by 2025 by moving the country away from a 'make-take-waste' linear economy model to one that protects resources and eliminates waste along value chains.

During his speech, Skinnari stated: "The Finnish government has set a target of making Finland a global leader in the circular economy by 2025 and becoming carbon neutral by 2035. We are using administrative, legislative and economic instruments to guide the promotion of circular economy and remove barriers to its implementation in Finland as well as in the European Union. The transition is underway within government entities, businesses, towns and cities. It is already having a positive impact on the everyday lives of Finns."

During a virtual speech facilitated by a Nokia 5G hologram, Jyrki Katainen, President of The Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra, commented on the need for public and private sectors to join forces to embrace the transition: "Our current linear economic system has turned out to be problematic in numerous ways and it requires profound reshaping. It has brought us to the situation where, to be blunt, we can say that the current economic system is bad for the climate, biodiversity and society, and it's also bad for the economy itself. To address these challenges, we need circular economy solutions."



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Since Finland launched the road map in 2016, the global community has widely recognised the circular economy model as an essential step needed to mitigate the risks of climate change, resource scarcity, and damage to the world's ecosystems.

Demonstrating the UAE's commitment to sustainability and its journey towards net-zero targets, Dr Al-Hosany addressed the measures the UAE is taking to transition to a circular economy, stating: "The rapid growth of the UAE's economy and population has brought great prosperity but also major increases in the demand for resources such as energy, food and water. During the first week of Expo 2020 Dubai, the UAE announced a strategy to become net-zero by 2050. As the first Gulf state in the region to launch a net-zero strategy, our intentions are clear; and our example has created a ripple effect across economies and neighbouring Gulf states.

"As part of this initiative, we will move away from a degenerative linear economy where resources are extracted, manufactured, used or consumed and then thrown away, towards a regenerative circular economy where consumption and production operate sustainably within environmental limits, securing the wellbeing of both current and future generations," Dr Al-Hosany concluded.

In January 2021, the UAE cabinet approved the UAE Circular Economy Policy, which provides a comprehensive framework for determining the country's approach to achieving more sustainable governance and the ideal use of natural resources through the adoption of consumption and production methods that ensure the quality of life for current and future generations.

To assist other countries in their circular economy transition, Sitra has developed a [guide](#) that utilises Finland's learnings and challenges and provides a framework for countries to use when creating their road map. The guide, which is based on learnings from Finland's circular economy road map process, provides tools, guidelines and inspiration for countries moving towards or already taking their first steps towards a circular economy.

Katainen reiterated the importance of collaboration and change: "The circular economy alone is not the goal but instead is a tool that enables us to live within the planetary boundaries. It is important that the transition is led by example and that all sectors are involved. It is of utmost importance to foresee the effects of the change and use this knowledge to ensure a just transition. Joining forces is at the core of leadership in a circular economy. Companies have a crucial role in this transition, which comes with enormous opportunities. Companies that use the circular economy business models to keep raw materials in play through maintenance or re-purposing can create entirely new product categories."

In conclusion, Katainen said: "We hope we can have more ambitious goals and come ever closer to full circularity. We also hope more countries will join the journey. Last year, at least 20 countries in Europe published national roadmaps and strategies, and we hope many more countries will follow."



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Discussing their experiences with the circular economy both locally and globally, other expert speakers included Nina Kopola, Director General at [Business Finland](#); Kari Herlevi, Project Director at [The Finnish Innovation Fund, Sitra](#); Imtiaz Mahtab, Managing Director of MEA at [KONE](#); Kalle Saarimaa, VP at [Fortum, Waste & Recycling](#) and Atte Palomäki, Executive Vice President, Communications, Branding & Marketing at [Wärtsilä](#).

**(Ends.)**

**Pictures attached: (1) Kari Herlevi, Project Director at The Finnish Innovation Fund; Nina Kopola, Director General at Business Finland; Imtiaz Mahtab, Managing Director of MEA at KONE; Ville Skinnari, Minister for Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade of Finland; Her Excellency Dr Nawal Al-Hosany, Permanent Representative of the UAE to the International Renewable Energy Agency; Sitra Kalle Saarimaa, VP at Fortum, Waste & Recycling; Atte Palomäki, Executive Vice President in the Energy and Marine Technology Group Wärtsilä**

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**Notes to editor:**

**Additional quotes from key pavilion stakeholders:**

Severi Keinälä, Commissioner General of [Finland at Expo 2020 Dubai](#) reaffirmed Expo 2020 Dubai as a strategic platform for countries looking to adopt a circular economy model: “As the first country to have written a national road map to a circular economy, Finland has ambitions to reform its economic model by 2025. We are already witnessing economic success, sustained preservation of natural resources and positive integration across all industries. Many believe the circular economy is only about recycling. However, it is much more complex and requires systematic change and countrywide participation to reduce our current rate of consumption and overuse of natural resources.

“Expo 2020 Dubai will be a platform for Finnish businesses to showcase their innovative solutions and demonstrate the impact and contribution they are already making to ensure we reach our 2025 goal. The UAE is also making great strides in its efforts to implement its own strategy and we are grateful to be part of that change in the lead up to Expo 2020 Dubai.”

Links to the Finland at Expo 2020 Dubai social media platforms can be found below:

**Twitter:** [@FinlandExpo2020](#)

**LinkedIn:** [@Finland at Expo 2020 Dubai](#)

**Instagram:** [@finlandexpo2020dubai](#)

**About Business Finland:**



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Finland, in collaboration with 120 Finnish companies, will participate in Expo 2020 Dubai. Finland is one of the leading countries in terms of innovation and technology know-how. The Finnish pavilion presents globally leading clean technologies, a circular economy with sustainable use of resources, sustainable energy and digital solutions, mobile communications, machinery, education, health and wellbeing, travel and Finnish design.

Business Finland is the Finnish government organisation for innovation funding and trade, travel and investment promotion. Business Finland's 750 experts work in 44 offices globally and in 16 regional offices around Finland.

<https://www.finland-dubaexpo2020.com/>

<https://www.businessfinland.fi/en/do-business-with-finland/home/>

**About The Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra:**

The Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra is a future fund that collaborates with partners from different sectors to research, trial and implement bold new ideas that shape the future. Our aim is a Finland that succeeds as a pioneer in sustainable wellbeing. Sitra was founded in 1967 as a gift from Parliament to the 50-year old Finland. We are an independent public foundation operating directly under the supervision of the Finnish Parliament.