



BUILDING CIRCULARITY INTO OUR ECONOMIES THROUGH SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT

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THE POWER OF INSTITUTIONAL PURCHASING

Public procurement wields enormous purchasing power, accounting for an average of 12 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), and up to 30 per cent of GDP in many developing countries.¹ Leveraging this purchasing power by buying more sustainable goods and services can help drive markets in the direction of sustainability, reduce the negative impacts of an organization and produce positive benefits for the environment and society. The OECD Public Procurement Recommendation² refers to public procurement as the cornerstone of strategic governance as it contributes to achieving policy goals including environmental protection, innovation, job creation and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises. Other organisations have also acknowledged the critical role of the procurement function and built up the international momentum on sustainable procurement including: the World Bank which embedded sustainable procurement within its 2016 Procurement Framework,³ the revised Agreement on Government Procurement⁴ of the World Trade Organization which entered into force in 2014 and the 2014 EU Public Procurement Directive⁵ that recognises public procurement as one of the market-based instruments to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

“Sustainable procurement is now widely recognized as a strategic lever to drive innovation.”

The UN Sustainable Development Goals have reiterated the strong link between environmental protection, sustainable development and public procurement.

In fact, one of the targets under the Sustainable Development Goal 12 on sustainable consumption and production patterns focuses specifically on the promotion of “public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities”.⁶ The advancement of sustainable public procurement is thus recognized as being a key strategic component of the global efforts towards achieving more sustainable consumption and production patterns.

The United Nations Environment Programme published in June 2017 its flagship report, the *2017 Global Review of Sustainable Public Procurement*⁷ (herein referred to as the *2017 Global Review*) that examines the state of sustainable public procurement policies and practices undertaken by national governments worldwide in the last five years. According to the *2017 Global Review*, sustainable public procurement practices are becoming more widespread in all regions with more and more interesting examples to share and leverage. The report also demonstrates an evolution in focus, with sustainable public procurement practices, predominantly focusing on energy conservation, resource efficiency and climate change mitigation in 2013 towards a broader approach that also uses procurement policies to encourage social inclusion and equity.

Sustainable procurement is now widely recognized as a strategic lever to drive innovation. New methods, tools and innovative approaches to sustainable public procurement are emerging and driving change, such as shared supplier platforms and scorecards, market engagement to promote innovation, e-procurement and impact sourcing.

Sustainable procurement practices are not limited to national and local government agencies. The private sector and NGOs are also showing global leadership in this area. In so doing, they are seeking to reduce their organizations’ risks, encourage sustainability in their value chain and, in some cases, reduce costs. By incorporating sustainability requirements

into the sourcing process, such as in supplier evaluation and specifications, private organizations convey a strong market signal, which can in turn drive down the cost of sustainable products and services. **The combination of public and private sector demand for sustainable products and services can help scale the market for these products and services.**

This document has been developed as part of the United Nations Environment Programme work on sustainable consumption and production and continuous engagement with building circularity into our economies. It has been created as a contribution to – and in close collaboration with the Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy (PACE), a project accelerator and convening mechanism dedicated to decoupling resource use from economic growth. PACE is chaired by the heads of the United Nations Environment Programme, the Global Environment Facility and Philips. The Ellen MacArthur Foundation, the International Resource Panel, Circle Economy and Accenture Strategy are knowledge partners. It is currently hosted by the World Economic Forum.

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