



# SOUTH AFRICA CIRCULAR ECONOMY HOTSPOT 2024

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Cape Town hosts the first South Africa Circular Economy Hotspot 2024

**Cape Town, 19th September 2024:** Today, Sustainable Inclusive Business Kenya (SIB-K), in partnership with the African Circular Economy Network (ACEN) and TheRockGroup (TRG) in South Africa, hosted the first-ever South Africa Circular Economy Hotspot 2024 (#SACEH24), a two-day conference focused on advancing sustainable and circular economy practices across Africa. The event, which took place at the renowned Hasso Plattner D-School Afrika at the University of Cape Town, brought together over 300 delegates from across the continent, including 35 expert speakers, 25 exhibitors, and stakeholders, to discuss critical issues surrounding sustainability, biodiversity, and pollution management.

Speaking during the opening ceremony, Karin Boomsma, the Project Director and lead consultant for East and Southern Africa at TheRockGroup, highlighted that South Africa is a hub of circular economy initiatives. She emphasized that *“the country is on the brink of a sustainable revolution and is poised to drive transformative change across the region.”*

Katharina Gihring, the Strategic Programme & Operations Lead for the African Circular Economy Network (ACEN), echoed her sentiments. She stressed that embracing a circular economy is not just an option but a necessity. *“It opens new avenues for positive growth while urgently addressing the triple planetary crisis: climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution,”* she said.

Richard Perez, Director of the Hasso Plattner D-School Afrika, reiterated the importance of innovative spaces for collaborative problem-solving. He stated, *“The d-school provides the ideal environment for fostering creativity that can lead to impactful solutions in circular economy initiatives.”* He also thanked the organizers for choosing Hasso Plattner D-School Afrika as the circular economy venue, a 6-star rating green building certified by the Green Building Council of South Africa. This building exemplifies innovative green best practices and empowers individuals from across the continent to adopt a design-led thinking mindset, crafting human-centered solutions that address the challenges of our ever-changing planet.

In her remarks, Professor Linda Godfrey from the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research highlighted circular initiatives in South Africa. She emphasized that the circular economy is not about waste management but sustainable resource management, positively impacting people and the planet.

Similarly, H el ene Rekkers, the Netherlands Consul-general in Cape Town, showcased the consulate's commitment to circular activities, in particular its #CocreateDesignChallenge, which encourages innovators, businesses, non-profits, and students in Cape Town to present circular design solutions to build a sustainable future. During the conference, eight finalists out of the 80 applicants of the #CocreateDesignChallenge pitched their circular ideas, with four winners across Fashion & Textiles, Consumer Education, Repair & Re-use, and Organic Waste management were awarded seed funding of R15,000 each, equivalent to \$860. This initiative is spearheaded by the Mission Network of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in South Africa in collaboration with the Craft and Design Institute (CDI).

The logo features a stylized, multi-colored circular emblem composed of various geometric shapes and lines in shades of blue, green, yellow, orange, and red, arranged in a circular pattern. To the right of the emblem, the text "SOUTH AFRICA CIRCULAR ECONOMY HOTSPOT 2024" is displayed in a bold, black, sans-serif font, stacked in three lines.

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For his part, Dr Theuns Vivian, Head of Destination Development and Place Marketing at the City of Cape Town, informed the delegates about the city's various sustainability strides and responsible tourism achievements.

Day one of the conference also saw circular performances from the Joe Slovo High School Choir and a sustainable fashion showcase from *Taking Care of Business (TCB)*, a nonprofit social enterprise empowering unemployed South Africans and their families to escape the cycle of poverty through small business opportunities, mainly within the circular economy.

Participants participated in five engaging panel discussions: Water & Industrial Symbiosis, Digitalisation & Innovation, Agriculture & Food Systems, Circular Mining and Energy, and Sustainable Tourism. Three field trips to regenerative destinations further aimed at providing a more practical experience of best practices in the circular economy in South Africa.

The two-day conference is supported by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency, the Embassy and Consulate of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in South Africa, and the Embassy of Finland. Their commitment to sustainability and circular economy principles has been pivotal in bringing this event to life. Other major partners include the Hasso Plattner d-School Afrika\*, AWQAF SA, Atlantis Special Economic Zone, Hloolo by Fetola, Circular South Africa, WWF, Extrupet, and Painted Wolf Wines.

Day two of the South Africa Circular Economy Hotspot 2024 will occur tomorrow, Friday 20th September. It will feature Business-2-Business matchmaking and thought-provoking discussions on the South Africa National Plastics Action Plan (SA NPAP), Circular Fashion, and Textiles. Masterclasses on circular entrepreneurship, circular economy tools, and embedding circularity and compliance are designed to provide in-depth insights and equip participants with practical knowledge and skills toward speeding the transition to a circular economy in South Africa.

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### **About Sustainable Inclusive Business Kenya**

Sustainable Inclusive Business Kenya is a knowledge Center established through a fruitful partnership between the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA) and MVO Nederland with the support of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Kenya. SIB-K spearheads the adoption of sustainable and circular business practices in Kenya through impactful knowledge-sharing and strategic collaborations. <https://sustainableinclusivebusiness.org/>

### **About Africa Circular Economy Network**

ACEN has championed the circular economy since 2016 across 42 African countries, uniting over 500 members to create a sustainable future. <https://acen.africa/>

### **About TheRockGroup**

TRG is a leading sustainability consultancy offering bespoke circular business strategies and accredited educational programs in South Africa, Brussels, and the Netherlands. <https://therockgroup.biz/>