

## Circularity and Used Textile Trade

### *National Level Policy Dialogue*

The global textiles and apparel industry is projected to reach [USD 3.3 trillion](#) by 2030. A key driver of this growth is the rise of fast fashion, which has led to increased production and consumption of clothing items. However, this growth comes with significant environmental and social costs, including an estimated [USD 500 billion](#) lost annually due to textile waste. Much of this waste finds its way to developing countries, where recycling infrastructure and waste management systems are often inadequate to handle the influx

Pakistan, along with Kenya, South Africa, and Ghana, is a key participant in the [Circularity and Used Textiles Trade](#) project. These countries are major importers of secondhand textiles. While other countries such as India, Bangladesh, and Chile also have significant textiles industries, Pakistan and the other countries in the project have unique challenges related to secondhand textiles, particularly in terms of managing the influx of clothing, ensuring proper waste disposal, and fostering circular economies around textiles

Pakistan, in particular, has seen a significant increase in secondhand textile imports, receiving 433,651 metric tonnes of used clothing in FY2023-24, according to the Ministry of Commerce, a 17% rise compared to the previous year. This surge reflects a strong demand for affordable clothing, especially among low-income households. The secondhand textile sector also plays a crucial role in job creation, with many women involved in sorting, recycling, and reselling these textiles. However, the benefits of this sector are tempered by challenges such as lack of adequate recycling infrastructure, which leads to environmental issues, and gaps in policy frameworks that hinder the transition to more sustainable practices.

In response to these challenges, UNEP and SDPI have partnered under the Circularity and Used Textiles Trade Project, which is funded by the European Union. This project seeks to address specific issues faced by Pakistan, Kenya, South Africa, and Ghana by improving recycling infrastructure, promoting policy reforms, and encouraging sustainable trade practices.

Recognising this, this *National Level Policy Dialogue* will convene government ministries, policymakers and key stakeholders to discuss, explore and identify potential solutions to the following questions:

1. What are the priorities of the government and stakeholders for textile sector development in Pakistan, both in the short and long term? How does the trade in used textiles align with, or conflict with the local industry's development priorities in the textile sector?
2. What are the main challenges in managing used textile imports and advancing a circular textile economy in Pakistan? What strengths does Pakistan possess as a player in the global used textile supply chain?
3. How can regulatory barriers be addressed to facilitate the trade of used textiles in developing countries, with specific examples from Pakistan?

4. What policy and trade reforms are needed to clearly distinguish between used textiles and textile waste in Pakistan?
5. What are the key financing and investment priorities to enhance recycling infrastructure for used textiles in Pakistan, and how can international stakeholders contribute to this effort?

Outcomes of this national policy dialogue will contribute to shaping the enabling policy framework that supports the Government of Pakistan and key stakeholders in advancing the country's priorities and objectives for circular and sustainable solutions in the trade of secondhand textiles.

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