

**Joint Open Letter from Asian City Leaders to International Organizations
and Stakeholders: Promoting Circular Cities in Asia**

Tuesday 25th November 2025,

Background

Since the launch of the Asia Smart City Conference (hereinafter referred to as “ASCC”) in 2012, Asian city leaders have been gathering annually in Yokohama to discuss and share best practices to address urban challenges faced by rapidly growing cities in Asia. Among these challenges, waste management has consistently been one of the top concerns.

At the same time, the extraction and processing of resources for the global economy are estimated to account for over 55% of greenhouse gas emissions driving climate change, up to 40% of health impacts caused by pollution, and more than 90% of global biodiversity loss. As cities are on the front lines of these global challenges, decoupling economic growth from resource consumption and reducing environmental impacts, through the transition to a circular city, has become an urgent and essential priority.

Circular Cities Declaration in Europe

Looking globally, Europe offers a leading example of regionally integrated efforts to promote a circular economy. ICLEI Europe with wide range of stakeholders launched the European Circular Cities Declaration, which guided circular transition across the continent. Building on these efforts, the Circular Cities Frontrunner Group, led by the City of Amsterdam, with support from ICLEI Europe and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, has amplified the voices of city leaders to advocate for stronger policies reinforcing the critical role of cities in the circular transition.

Asian economies are increasingly recognizing the importance of the circular economy, with various initiatives emerging at the national, city, corporate, and community levels. City leaders gathering at ASCC also place high importance on balancing environmental sustainability with economic development. However, many cities still lack the necessary knowledge and experience to address this challenge. We expect the establishment of a regional mechanism to strengthen collective city actions toward a circular society as a region-wide effort to maximize impact.

Calling on International Organizations and Stakeholders

Practical support and collaboration with international organizations, city networks, businesses, and other stakeholders has played a significant role in achieving a sustainable urban environment in Asia. We therefore call upon international organizations and stakeholders to take the following actions, among others, to help

achieve a circular society in Asia:

- Establishing and managing a “Circular Cities Declaration” framework tailored to the context of Asian cities. In particular, we call on ICLEI Japan to consider serving as the secretariat to manage the framework.
- Providing opportunities for capacity building for city officials
- Supporting policy development
- Recognizing and awarding best practices
- Sponsoring and supporting the administration and implementation of projects under the Circular Cities Declaration framework in Asia

We believe that, with the commitment of international partners, we can make a significant impact on regional prosperity and create more sustainable and resilient urban environments.