

(HxN News) Igniting Circular Fashion through Collaboration at the United Nations HLPF Event

IGNITING CIRCULAR FASHION

STRENGTHENING LOCAL VALUE CHAINS THROUGH TRANSPARENCY AND TRACEABILITY

UN High-Level Political Forum side event. Tuesday, July 7th, 2020

ROUND TABLE

Context

Hecho X Nosotros (HXN) hosted a roundtable to discuss the potential of the fashion industry as a catalyzer for sustainable development and the need to implement more transparent practices throughout value chains, empowering MSMEs and generating capacity building initiatives to develop circular production models more favorable for the environment and the people. Transversally to all the conversation was the idea of co-creating solutions to achieve circular models, considering the fashion industry a force for good.

The event was organized on the margins of the 2020 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and featured guest speakers:

- **Adriana Marina, Founder of Hecho por Nosotros and President of B-Corp animaná**
- **Ian Cronin, Project Lead Future of Advanced Manufacturing and Production, World Economic Forum (WEF).**
- **Maria Teresa Pisani, Acting Head Sustainable Trade and Outreach Unit, Economic Cooperation and Trade Division, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).**
- **Burak Cakmak, Former Dean of Fashion, Parsons School of Design.**
- **Pranav Khanna, NGO HxN, Technical Textiles expert.**
- **Moderated by Laura Giadorou Koch, Chief Engagement Officer, B Women.**

Adriana Marina welcomed the audience by sharing the work that the NGO HxN has been doing to reshape the fashion industry along with the B-Corp animaná. Hecho por Nosotros focuses on themes such as defragmented value chains, lack of technology access which is crucial as a tool for the welfare of society since it has immense potential to lead the way by helping to strengthen the value chain of the fashion industry through traceability and transparency while proposing concrete solutions in the framework of the High-Level Political Forum agenda.

Laura Giadorou Koch kicked-off the discussion with questions on how can we ignite fashion through collaboration and how technologies such as blockchain can be leveraged to promote sustainable value chains; to bring experts' insights on projects that serve these purposes; and to think ahead on the future of the industry amid a transition to a post- COVID-19 situation.

Key Takeaways

María Teresa Pisani (Acting Head Sustainable Trade and Outreach Unit, Economic Cooperation and Trade Division, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)) gave an overview of the potential that the fashion industry has to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as one of the biggest industries worldwide, which employs 60 million people directly. She expressed her concern about the slow progress on sustainable production and consumption models and argued that, despite the concrete evidence on the negative social and environmental impact of the industry, *“It is time to come up with concrete solutions on how to accelerate the path towards sustainability and circularity”*. Here the concept of transparency and traceability appears as a key driver for circular models, especially given that (i) from the production side, it is an industry that has an extremely complex value chain, with very fragmented links all over the world, mostly MSMEs, and (ii) from the consumer's side, it brings impartial tools for decision making: *“consumers are willing to pay the price, but they don't trust the way products have been done, they don't trust the process is actually sustainable”*.

Finally, based on the extensive work done by UNECE, she concluded with the need of creating a common language and understanding on what circularity and sustainability mean for, only then, being able to apply technology, such as Blockchain, to serve those purposes.

Ian Cronin (Project Lead Future of Advanced Manufacturing and Production, World Economic Forum (WEF)).

WEF's experience on how to create cooperative environments for more transparent value chains and highlighted the need to stimulate cooperation between all the links of the supply chain, especially the middle links, building a coherent ecosystem to effectively instrument transparent and traceable practices throughout the chain. *“There is a need to create a win-win competitiveness game,”* generating value for all links, with a focus on the weaker ones. COVID-19 brings a concrete opportunity to reset and build on this type of cooperation. On the role of technology, he stated: *“We can't think of technology only as a tool, but as a partner,”* raising the idea of a need to build an ecosystem for a better understanding between stakeholders in the industry and create a common language to trigger sustainability through transparency and traceability. *“There is a need of getting the right and enough players involved to take advantage of the use of technology and traceability across supply chains.”*

Pranav Khanna (NGO HxN, Technical Textiles expert) with ideas from a social entrepreneurship point of view, on how to reshape the industry, especially thinking ahead of a post-COVID industry, highlighting the importance of a collaborative approach.

He referred to the case of MSMEs and technology as accelerators for this change: *“MSMEs are the backbone of all economies”* and technology enables MSMEs to connect directly with the consumers which opens an opportunity to progress towards circular models. *“The opportunity out here is to have the ability to use technology to build your narrative, to use Blockchain technology to show you are who you say you are”*. In terms of co-creation, Pranav underscored the case of HxN, a successful story of collaborative networks to leverage MSMEs through capacity building and technical cooperation, impacting on more than 7000 artisans across the Andean region and working closely with universities and international organizations to solve artisans' and MSMEs' bottlenecks to connect with the markets. He also elaborated on the 'toolkit' developed by HxN as an example of collaborative tools that are in the intersection with technology.

Burak Cakmak, (Former Dean of Fashion, Parsons School of Design) from an educational point of view, shed light on how institutions are experiencing a transition towards bringing alive the idea of designing with a purpose. He raised an emotional angle on the role of fashion, not only as a way to build and preserve culture but also as an important aspect when thinking ahead of its future role: *“That emotional element is crucial as we re-imagine how we will take the industry forward”*. It is important to think about how to link the emotional

connection that occurs across the value chain, reshaping old models that only focused on efficiency and economic maximization principles. Burak affirmed that creating with purpose is at the core of current curricula.

Adriana Marina affirms that "technology plays a key role to create a more direct dialogue between designers and consumers which opens the door to rethink the value chain. This is an opportunity to put the spotlight on the designer and their story, creating an ecosystem for new circular models, engaging with local people, and, most importantly, reducing design strategies that are at the service of creating mass and low-cost garments."

We thank the panelists and the more than 200 participants for their commitment and thoughtful discussions and participation. The current COVID crisis exacerbates and brings an opportunity to work harder on a structural change in the fashion industry, following the road map brought by the 2030 agenda on sustainable development. Only by working on collective actions is that the fashion industry will change its course to a new one that serves the people and the environment for good.



Adriana Marina, Founder of B Corp animaná and NGO Hecho por Nosotros hosts

HECHO X NOSOTROS

animaná

UN High Level Political Forum side event - July 7, 2020

IGNITING CIRCULAR FASHION BY COLLABORATION

Strengthening local value chains through transparency and traceability

UNITED NATIONS HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM



Featured panelists:



Ian Cronin, Project Lead Future of Advanced Manufacturing and Production, (WEE) World Economic Forum



ADRIANA MARINA
HxN Founder & President



(WEL) World Economic Forum.

Maria Teresa Pisani,

Acting Head Sustainable Trade and Outreach Unit,
Economic Cooperation and Trade Division, (UNECE)
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.



Burak Cakmak,

Former Dean of Fashion, Parsons School of Design



Pranav Khanna,

NGO Hecho por Nosotros, Technical Textiles expert



Moderated by Laura Giadorou Koch,

Chief Engagement Officer, B Women