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Partnering up for a sustainable circular economy

COCA-COLA Malaysia in association with American Malaysian Chamber of Commerce (Amcham Malaysia) hosted a special forum titled "Our Future, Our Choice: Sustainability Forum".

The Amcham Spotlight Session focused on accelerating the transition to circularity for plastic packaging in Malaysia.

The event was attended by Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change Minister Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad.

The forum also received significant backing from a key partner – Malaysian Recycling Alliance (Marea).

This collaboration underlines a shared commitment towards environmental sustainability.

"Our shift towards a circular economy is not just a policy initiative, it's a systemic move towards resilience, sustainability, and a brighter future," said Nik Nazmi.

"Our commitment, as reflected in our national policies, signifies our determination to efficiently use resources, reduce waste and minimise environmental impact.

"It's a shared responsibility, and initiatives like Coca-Cola's dedication to innovative packaging solutions play a vital role in supporting our journey towards a circular economy."

While plastics have become an integral part of modern society, the proportion of plastic waste not being properly man-



(From left) Amcham Malaysia chief executive officer Siobhan Das, van Zandwijk, Nik Nazmi, Khairul Anwar and Benetello at the Amcham session titled 'Our Future, Our Choice: Sustainability Forum'.

aged in Malaysia is a cause for concern.

The company acknowledges the pressing need to tackle the issue of plastic waste, with data showing that just 24% of plastics introduced into the Malaysian market were recycled in 2019.

"At Coca-Cola, we recognise the urgency and complexity of the plastic waste challenge in Malaysia," said The Coca-Cola Company (Asean and South Pacific) sustainability and partnerships director Kirsten van Zandwijk.

"No single entity can overcome this challenge alone.

"Inspired by the circular economy model, we constantly lever-

age resources to eliminate waste and tackle climate problems caused by packaging.

"Our 'World Without Waste' initiative embodies this dedication, driving global sustainable packaging efforts aiming for recyclability and a sustainable environment."

Coca-Cola Bottlers Malaysia (Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei) public affairs, communications and sustainability director Khairul Anwar Ab Gahani concurred that collaboration and a circular economy were vital to Coca-Cola's commitment.

All their packaging, including cans and PET (polyethylene terephthalate) bottles, are

fully recyclable.

"Utilising recyclable materials in our packaging is another step towards reducing environmental footprint," he said.

Coca-Cola actively works with various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as Malaysian Nature Society and Waste Management Association of Malaysia to promote responsible waste management and recycling.

They also collaborate with organisations such as SWM Environment Sdn Bhd, Muslim Aid, Forest Research Institute Malaysia, MareCet Malaysia, Global Environment Centre, Reef Check and The Ocean

Cleanup, as well as selected universities.

In his address at the event, Marea chief executive officer Roberto Benetello emphasised the organisation's commitment to driving positive change.

"Marea, a coalition of prominent industry leaders actively participating in voluntary extended producer responsibility (EPR) initiatives, is dedicated to taking tangible steps to boost recycling rates and minimise packaging leakage into the environment.

"Our members have made substantial commitments to ensure a significant portion of their packaging materials are recovered and recycled.

"They are eager to embrace secondary raw materials like PET and strive to make these materials accessible at equitable prices.

"Marea is poised to play a pivotal role in facilitating this transition," he said.

As a founding member of Marea, Coca-Cola attaches importance to establishing strong collaborations with stakeholders, government bodies, industry colleagues and local organisations.

"We're deeply committed to leading strategic alliances with key parties," van Zandwijk said.

"Collaboratively, we're paving the way in collection and recycling of packaging to support the progression of a circular economy within Malaysia."