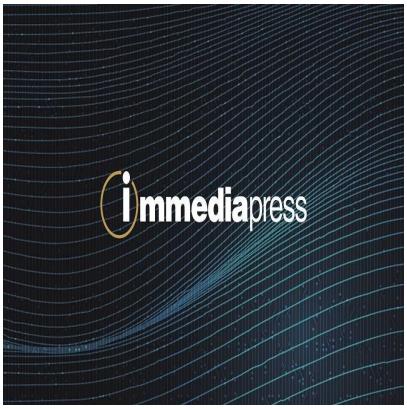

CATL and the Ellen Macarthur Foundation Set Direction for Circular EV Batteries with Landmark Whitepaper

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DAVOS, Switzerland, Jan. 24, 2026 /PRNewswire/ â?? Leading The Charge â?? Turning risk into reward with a circular economy for EV batteries and critical minerals, a whitepaper released by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation during the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2026, marks the first integrated, actionable circular value-chain roadmap for EV batteries grounded in real-world industrial practice. It also sets a landmark milestone in the cooperation between CATL and the Foundation.

Developed with input from over 30 leading organizations across the EV battery ecosystem â?? including CATL, DHL, Volvo, and JLR, alongside research institutions and NGOs â?? the report sets out a clear, industry-informed direction for how EV batteries must be designed, used, recovered, and reintegrated to maximise value and reduce systemic risk across the value chain.

As the founding strategic partner of The Foundationâ??s Critical Minerals Mission, CATL worked closely with The Foundation and industry peers to translate circular economy principles into practical, deployable actions grounded in real operating experience. The roadmap also supports CATLâ??s Global Energy Circularity Commitment, including its long-term goal to decouple battery growth from virgin raw material extraction.

It highlights the opportunities a circular EV battery system can unlock across environment, economy, product, and broader value creation. By keeping batteries and their critical minerals in use across multiple lifecycles, it reduces demand for newly mined materials, lowers emissions, and supports renewable energy integration. It also increases economic value by improving material efficiency, lowering waste and operational costs, and creating new revenue streams. At the same time, it strengthens supply chain resilience and distributes economic benefits more equitably across regions, showing that a systemic, circular approach transforms potential risks into strategic, value-generating opportunities.

Five bright spots to unlock a circular EV battery systemThe whitepaper identifies five interdependent actions needed to keep battery materials in high-value use and strengthen system resilience:

CATL actions already in practiceCATL is already putting these system-level actions into practice across its operations. By separating the battery from the vehicle, CATL manages batteries as centrally managed assets, increasing utilization, enabling scheduled maintenance, and ensuring predictable return at end of use. Today, CATL operates more than 1,000 passenger-vehicle and over 300 commercial-vehicle swap stations, supported by a growing ecosystem of more than 100 partners.

This system integration enables high-quality recovery at scale. CATLâ??s recycling operations achieve recovery rates of 99.6% for nickel, cobalt, and manganese, and 96.5% for lithium, with processing capacity expanding toward 270,000 tonnes per year. In parallel, CATL is applying alternative chemistries such as sodium-ion batteries, using widely available materials and reducing lifecycle carbon emissions per kilowatt-hour by up to 60%, reinforcing circular performance across mobility, swapping, and energy storage applications.

Scaling togetherSpeaking at The Foundationâ??s Leadership Briefing among CATL Jiang Li, Vice-Chairman and Board Secretary of CATL highlighted: â??This report marks a major milestone in the global journey towards a circular battery economy. Circular battery systems must now be scaled across regions, industries, and applications â?? from EVs to energy storage â?? and adapted to diverse market contexts.â?•

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â??As EV adoption accelerates, a circular economy for batteries and critical minerals is no longer optional â?? it is essential to affordability, resilience, and long-term growth while reducing environmental and social impacts,â?• said Wen-Yu Weng, Executive Leader for Critical Minerals at the Ellen MacArthur Foundation. â??EV batteries are strategic assets, and circular approaches are key to retaining their value and ensuring critical minerals never become waste. We welcome CATLâ??s contribution and look forward to continued collaboration to help scale a truly circular battery system and support the wider energy transition.â?•

For CATL, this agenda directly underpins its pathway to carbon neutrality â?? building on the achievement of carbon neutrality across all its battery plants, and its target to achieve carbon neutrality across the full value chain by 2035.

The launch of the report marks an early milestone in CATL and The Foundationâ??s broader collaboration to accelerate circularity of critical minerals. The next phase will focus on stress-testing these approaches in real-world environments, to understand how design, use, life extension, collection, and recycling loops function together at scale.

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