Draft for validation by National members

ISWA Declaration for COP31 – Antalya, Türkiye (2026)

Improved waste and resource management – a key enabler for climate mitigation

As the world gathers in Antalya, Türkiye for COP31, the International Solid Waste Association (ISWA), alongside its global members and partners, amplifies the voice of the waste and resource management sector and calls global attention to the critical role of the sector in reaching a climate neutral world.

We reaffirm our call to decision-makers when shaping climate plans, to enhance the mitigation role of the waste and resource management sector, while also incorporating circular economy measures into actions of all other sectors. Circular economy should be understood as a systemic, full circular value-chain approach that begins with waste prevention, resource-efficient design and product use, and is enabled by circular business models that keep products, components and materials in use for as long as possible. Practical waste-sector feedback on material quality, recyclability and end-of-life challenges can help guide upstream decisions and activities. Circular business models should be promoted as an enabler for implementing higher-value circular strategies in practice, by creating incentives to reduce resource use, extend product lifetimes, enable reuse and repair, and retain the value of products, components and materials over time, rather than relying on linear sales and disposal models. The waste and resource management sector holds an immediate, cost-effective, and cross-cutting greenhouse gas mitigation potential, especially for super pollutants like methane, and can contribute to resilience and adaptation to a changing climate and other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In addition to climate benefits, improving waste management systems also leads to significant reductions in air and ocean pollution, delivering direct public health and environmental co-benefits.

Promoting Sustainable Waste Management Worldwide and a Transition to a Circular Economy

Waste and Resource Management: a critical driver for climate mitigation

The waste and resource management sector is too often reduced to a single, modest number: the methane and black carbon emissions directly attributed to it under IPCC accounting, estimated at only a few percent of global anthropogenic greenhouse gases (GHGs). This framing radically understates the sector's real importance. The climate benefits of waste prevention, reuse and recycling accrue not to the waste sector itself but to the industries whose virgin material demand they displace – paper, plastics, metals and glass – and, for organic waste, to agriculture and food systems. Counted this way, as highlighted in the Global Waste Management Outlook 2024 and in a recent peer-reviewed analysis, up to 15–20% of global anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions can be mitigated through improved waste and resource management and circular economy strategies. This is one of the largest, most immediate, and most cost-effective mitigation opportunities available today, yet it remains under-recognized and underutilized in global climate frameworks precisely because its true scale is hidden by narrow, sector-siloed accounting.

Our call to action for COP31

1. **Accelerate circular and climate-resilient waste management systems**

Realizing this larger mitigation potential means treating waste prevention and the circular economy as core climate strategy in their own right not an afterthought to methane control:

- Prioritize waste prevention through refuse, rethink and reduce strategies, better product design, and circular business models that extend product lifetimes, enable reuse and repair, and keep materials in use rather than relying on linear sales and disposal. Products and packaging should be designed from the outset for safety, durability and recyclability including through packaging reuse schemes and by avoiding packaging that is difficult or impossible to recycle, or that relies on harmful chemicals which cannot re-enter circular systems and can only be disposed of through safe final disposal options supporting a Safe-and-Sustainable-by-Design (SSbD) approach that reduces downstream treatment challenges. This depends on active collaboration across government, industry and civil society to build the systems needed to make it work.
- Scale up source separation to enhance materials recovery, while investing in Environmentally Sound Management compliant facilities for treating non-recyclable waste and for energy-recovery from non-recyclable waste including, where appropriate, material recovery.
- Promote decentralized waste management and resource recovery systems, particularly in mountain, rural, island, and geographically constrained regions where centralized infrastructure may not be technically, economically, or environmentally feasible. Such systems can contribute significantly to methane mitigation, climate resilience, circular economy outcomes, and protection of sensitive ecosystems.
- Replace primary raw material with recovered secondary raw material, supported by reliable quality standards, transparent information on material composition, traceability, recycled-content requirements and public procurement that gives preference to circular and recycled materials. Valorise energy, including through thermal treatment and anaerobic digestion, with material recovery from residues where appropriate, only for unavoidable residual waste or organic residues where prevention or material recycling are not feasible. Where water is required for these processes, prioritize the use of reclaimed water, where technically, environmentally, and economically feasible, to reduce freshwater consumption and promote circular water management.
- Establish structured cooperation between producers and the waste management sector to define and coordinate their respective roles across the product lifecycle, enabling practical feedback on recyclability, contamination risks, material quality and treatment barriers that can inform product design, packaging choices and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes.
- Phase out open burning, unregulated dumping of waste, and landfilling or incineration practices that are not compliant with ESM guidelines.

2. Prioritize food waste, organic waste management and methane mitigation

Two parallel priorities are needed, the first has an immediate methane emissions reduction impact, and the second has a longer-term impact:

I. Support the environmentally sound closure of dumpsites, the progressive rehabilitation of legacy disposal sites, and the upgrade or closure of non-ESM compliant landfills which do not capture methane. Recognize sanitary landfills as an essential component of

environmentally sound waste management systems, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, while promoting progressive methane mitigation, landfill gas recovery, and diversion of recoverable materials and organics.

II. Phase-out the mismanagement of biodegradable waste by integrating the following steps into national climate plans:

- Prevent food waste at the source reducing over-production, extending shelf life, and redistributing edible surplus to vulnerable populations before any treatment option is considered. Targeted awareness and participation measures for households, retailers, restaurants, food processors and public institutions can help reduce avoidable food waste, improve source separation, minimize contamination in organic waste streams and build trust in safely produced compost, digestate and other recovered organic products.
- Mandate separate collection of organic waste from households, commercial establishments, food processors and industry, and progressively invest in composting, anaerobic digestion, BSF and other proven treatment infrastructure, including decentralized, community- and cluster-scale systems in mountain, rural and island regions, sized to local conditions, infrastructure maturity and economic feasibility, recognizing food waste as a major component of biodegradable waste streams.
- Channel treated organic waste into a genuine bioeconomy, biofertilizer, biogas and biofuels, backed by quality standards and enforcement so recovered products are safe to use, with a safe final disposal option for non-compliant residues. Pretreat biodegradable waste to reduce immediate methane emissions when buried.
- Monitor and report methane and biogas emissions at all landfill and treatment sites, operational and closed, as the evidence base for national climate targets and for generating carbon credits under Article 6.

3. Mobilize climate finance for waste solutions

- Include waste sector related mitigation actions and waste derived products in adaptation measures supported by climate finance mechanisms, especially those of large institutions. Climate finance mechanisms should also support upstream circular economy solutions that extend product lifetimes, keep products, components and materials at their highest possible value, reduce demand for virgin resources, and enable SSbD approaches, including through reuse, repair and reverse logistics infrastructure.
- Build robust carbon markets that credibly recognize and value avoided emissions in the waste and resource management sector particularly those associated with methane mitigation, landfill gas recovery, biomethane production, and organic waste treatment, ensuring fair conditions, transparent pricing, and broad accessibility to projects in low- and middle-income countries.
- Recognize that universal access to environmentally sound waste management services may require blended financing mechanisms, including public support, climate finance, carbon revenues, and concessional funding, particularly in regions where local tariff revenues are insufficient to sustain investments.

- Develop performance-based financing models to support infrastructure upgrades, especially in low- and middle-income countries.
- Provide care and attention that financed solutions are positioned to align with UNDRIP rights and obligations. Ensure just-transition to sustainable waste management systems by actively engaging the informal waste sector and all relevant stakeholders in the development and implementation of strategies, ensuring inclusivity, equity and social protection.
- Leverage Article 6 mechanisms (both Article 6.2 bilateral arrangements and Article 6.4 market mechanisms) to monetize reduced methane emissions from waste management projects, and "avoided" emissions from energy recovery from waste including landfill gas recovery.
- Develop methodologies and protocols for waste management carbon credit generation under Article 6.4, ensuring transparent measurement, reporting, and verification (MRV) of emissions reductions in waste operations.
- Establish international carbon market linkages and partnerships to facilitate the trading of Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes (ITMOs) from high-potential waste sector projects, particularly those managing organic waste and reducing methane emissions.
- Ensure Article 6 financed projects include provisions for technology transfer, capacity building, and knowledge sharing with developing nations, promoting equitable access to carbon market benefits and supporting the transition to sustainable food waste management systems.

Promoting Sustainable Waste Management Worldwide and a Transition to a Circular Economy

ISWA's commitment for COP31 and beyond

At COP31, ISWA reaffirms its commitment to lead and coordinate a platform showcasing the sector's solutions across methane mitigation, circular economy, and inclusive livelihoods, while ensuring climate-resilient waste management infrastructure. We stand ready to support governments, cities, and communities in turning ambition into action. **We appeal on the COP31 Presidency to incorporate the waste and resource management sector into the big 'joint effort' to implement climate commitments.**

The sector is a key enabler of climate, environmental, and social goals. Let us act decisively, embedding waste and resources management into the heart of climate strategies.

With unity and determination, on behalf of the solid waste and resources management sector,

International Solid Waste Association (ISWA) with endorsement of National Members,

Istanbul, Türkiye
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