

# ISWA Declaration on Climate Change and the Waste and Resource Management Sector

*Athens, 3 October 2021*

Climate change is one of the greatest threats facing humanity and the recently released Sixth Assessment Report by the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) confirms that climate change is *already* impacting people and ecosystems. If we do not urgently apply both mitigating and adapting measures the consequences will be unprecedented. Improving waste management practices and transitioning to a sustainable waste and resource management and a circular economy are an important part of the solutions to mitigating greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions throughout the world.

The International Solid Waste Association (ISWA) is the only international association and the largest global network promoting sustainable and professional waste management and a transition to a circular economy worldwide. When consistent waste and resource management solutions, including recycling, composting, waste to energy and sound disposal are fully applied, the waste and resource sector can contribute significantly towards reducing GHG emissions.

ISWA estimates that phasing out open burning, capturing methane emissions and diverting biodegradable wastes from landfill has the potential to reduce global GHG emissions by 5-10%.

However, moving from end-of-pipe waste management towards resource management and the circular economy will also be instrumental to ensure carbon savings in other economic sectors. ISWA estimates that waste prevention, recycling and energy recovery could each contribute a further 5-10% reduction, giving a total mitigation potential from the waste and resources sector of around 20% of global GHG emissions.

To reduce the impact of poor waste management on the climate, on the environment and human health, there is an urgent need to ensure sound and sustainable waste management globally as well as the transition to a circular economy is accelerated. Furthermore, sustainable waste management should be part of the NDC's and avoided emissions should be validated to promote measures to improve waste management.

Acknowledging the sixth assessment report by the IPCC which states that overall, the global sectors that contribute the largest warming on short time scales are the methane-dominated sources, i.e., energy production (fossil fuel mining and distribution), agriculture and waste management;

The General Assembly of the International Solid Waste Association (ISWA) does hereby recognize that:

1. Mitigating the effects of Climate Change requires immediate and priority action from governments, businesses, and citizens in order to avoid further risks to human life, ecosystems, land, property and the economy.



2. The waste and resource management sector holds a unique position as a relevant net reducer of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, representing an opportunity for carbon reduction which is yet to be fully realized.
3. The price of inaction to mitigate Climate Change will be significantly higher than the costs of taking action, and thus the waste and resource management sector represented by ISWA is ready to participate proactively in various multi-stakeholder platforms to influence the global action agenda and reinforce a low carbon economy.
4. The waste and resource management sector must be part of implementing the portfolio of solutions for mitigation and adaptation to reduce global emissions essential to reaching climate stability. It offers both an immediate and cost-effective opportunity to achieve substantial cuts in global SLCFs<sup>1</sup> and carbon dioxide-equivalent emissions and the opportunity to achieve savings in other economic sectors.
5. Fast action to mitigate SLCFs, such as methane and black carbon, will help slow the rate of climate change and improve the chances of staying below the 1.5°C or 2°C climate targets in the near term. Longer-term climate protection will only be possible if deep and persistent cuts in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are also rapidly realized.
6. The actions of the waste and resource management sector can be applied across economies, geographies, and industrial sectors. As such, these actions must be considered essential components of national, local and corporate strategies for mitigating climate change (e.g. Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), climate finance mechanisms available to low and middle-income countries and corporate ESG commitments and portfolios).
7. The waste and resource management sector also has a major role to play in improving public health, protecting life on land and below water, enhancing productivity, supporting a sustainable economic recovery and meeting the Sustainable Development Goals as the world population and materials consumption continue to grow.
8. Waste prevention, reuse, recycling and resource recovery not only make a significant contribution to climate change mitigation; they also minimise environmental impacts, reduce costs, increase jobs, decrease potential risks and liabilities across supply chains and play a central role in the transition to a circular economy.
9. The waste management and resource industry can provide a reliable supply of energy using existing proven and sustainable technologies.
10. Carbon Pricing is essential to guide business decisions and investments towards low-carbon technologies. The International Climate Agreement should establish the foundation for integrating a robust and predictable

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<sup>1</sup> Both methane and black carbon are short-lived climate forcers (SLCFs), which have much greater global heating potentials than carbon dioxide. SLCFs also decay more quickly in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide.

carbon pricing system that is fair for all, and includes the waste and resource management sector.

Thus, the National Members of ISWA convened at its General Assembly, the governing body of the International Solid Waste Association (ISWA), an Observer Organization of the UNFCCC, call upon Governments to:

1. Recognize the potential and relevant role of the waste and resource management sector to reduce GHG emissions and SLCFs and to achieve further significant reductions in other industrial sectors.
2. Create effective conditions to accelerate the environmentally sound management of waste and the transition to a circular economy, which will largely eliminate black carbon emissions from open burning and uncontrolled disposal sites, facilitate significant GHG reductions from other sectors and thus contribute to climate change mitigation.
3. Prioritise waste and resource management strategies and integrate them in national plans and initiatives for climate mitigation and adaptation, including Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and climate finance mechanisms.
4. Create a robust governance system that provides clear, long-term, and predictable legislative and financial frameworks that will help to catalyse and scale-up the implementation of climate friendly solutions through the waste and resource management sector.
5. Recognise that in order to respond to the climate challenge, major public and private investments will be required to implement sound waste and resource management systems. These should integrate support for business and civil society led initiatives, and include research, development, and the transfer, construction and implementation of low carbon technology, providing support for concrete and bankable projects.
6. Put in place the necessary mechanisms to leverage public funds and private sector finance so as to de-risk investment in green technologies especially in low-and-middle income countries.

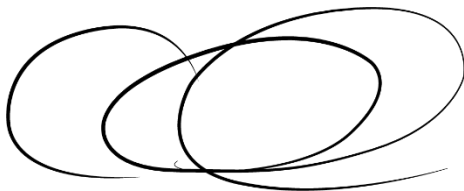
To fulfil these objectives, the International Solid Waste Association (ISWA), through its members, its Board, Working Groups and the General Secretariat commit to:

1. Work with International agencies, governments and other organisations to extend the access to adequate waste management systems to all citizens and support the transition to a circular economy, as a significant contribution to a better environment and the mitigation of GHG.
2. Promote the development of proper waste and resource management strategies and plans, for public and private institutions, considering waste prevention, waste collection, reuse, recycling, energy recovery and other

adequate treatment solutions, , aiming at providing effective solutions towards a net zero future by 2050.

3. Increase awareness, network for capacity building, disseminate knowledge and experience, and thus contribute to the advancement of technical and scientific knowledge on the subject by initiating and supporting research and education on GHG, SLCFs, and climate related issues.
4. Assess experiences from different countries and regions on policies, strategies and regulations to develop a sound basis for recommendations that would accomplish optimum waste and resource-related GHG emission reductions, both locally and globally.
5. Work closely with cities, municipalities, and other organisations to participate in case studies and targeted actions to tackle GHG emissions, supporting governments and policy makers in developing and implementing policies to mitigate climate change and establish a low carbon development through improved waste and resource management systems and the integration and acknowledgement of these local actions into the NDCs.
6. Reach out to the extraction, construction, and manufacturing industries and enhance cooperation on establishing good waste and resource management practices, such as sustainable planning, design and production patterns, better ESG indicators, as well as the application of recyclable materials, the usage of renewable energy, etc.

The undersigned Members of the General Assembly of the International Solid Waste Association (ISWA) fully endorse this Declaration.



On behalf of the ISWA Board  
Carlos Silva Filho  
President ISWA

## Signatories

This declaration was also signed and formally endorsed by the following National Members:

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ISWA Austria  
Austria

ARS Asociación para el Estudio de Residuos Sólidos  
Argentina

ABRELPE Associação Brasileira de Empresas de Limpeza Pública e Resíduos Especiais  
Brazil

BASWA Solid Waste Association – BASWA  
Bosnia and Herzegovina

INTERAFVAL  
Belgium

AEPA Asociación de Empresas y Profesionales para el Medio Ambiente  
Chile

AEPA Asociación de Empresas y Profesionales para el Medio Ambiente  
Chile

ASTEE Association Scientifique et Technique pour l'Eau et l'Environnement  
France

BKM Nonprofit Zrt.  
Hungary

HSWMA Hellenic Solid Waste Management Association  
Greece

ICWM Institute of Chartered Waste Managers  
India

DRAT Dan Region Association of Towns – Sanitation & Waste Disposal  
Israel

FENUR Fagráð um endurnýtingu og úrgang  
Iceland

InSWA Indonesia Solid Waste Association  
Indonesia

ISWALebanon ISWA Lebanon

Lebanon

LASA Waste Management Association of Latvia  
Latvia

FPEC Future Pioneers for Empowering Communities  
Jordan

NVRD  
Netherlands

DS Latinoamericana, A.C.  
Mexico

WMAM Waste Management Association of Malaysia  
Malaysia

APESB Associação Portuguesa de Engenharia Sanitária e Ambiental  
Portugal

be'ah Oman Environmental Services Holding Company  
Oman

Avfall Norge  
Norway

MaSWA Macedonian Solid Waste Association  
North Macedonia

IWMSA Institute of Waste Management of Southern Africa  
South Africa

WMRAS Waste Management and Recycling Association of Singapore  
Singapore

A.R.M.D. Romanian Association of Waste Management  
Romania

Avfall Sverige  
Sweden

ATEGRUS Asociación Técnica para la Gestión de Residuos y Medio  
Ambiente  
Spain

CEGRU Camara de Empresas Gestoras de Residuos del Uruguay  
Uruguay

CIWM The Chartered Institution of Waste Management  
United Kingdom