Small outlay, large impact: Substantial greenhouse gas emission reductions through sustainable waste and resource management


The numbers speak for themselves: Global sea levels are projected to rise by as much as 1 meter or more by the end of this century; 2014 was the warmest year on record in terms of global surface temperature; Antarctica is losing 134 billion metric tons of ice per year; and annual carbon dioxide emissions over the last 10 years have risen on average by 3 percent; the level of atmospheric carbon dioxide, during the last 650.000 years, has never been higher as today.¹

Avoiding, reducing and recycling waste is crucial for the mitigation of climate change caused by carbon emissions, while facing the fact that world population, urbanization and materials consumption continue to grow. The price of inaction is significantly higher than the cost of taking action, considering the serious risks of loss and damage to land, property, ecosystems and human life by the increase in greenhouse gases.

As the only international organisation promoting sustainable development in the waste management sector, ISWA considers waste as a valuable resource for materials and energy, and therefore addresses the waste and resource management sector and its work as an immediate and cost-effective opportunity to mitigate climate change.

The General Assembly of ISWA and members send a clear message

Being signed by 30 ISWA member countries from all over the world the Declaration sets out a clear commitment to addressing climate change, prior to the ISWA World Congress in Antwerp, Belgium (September 7th to 9th).

David Newman, ISWA President, said: “The waste and resource management industry occupies a unique position as a potential net reducer of greenhouse gas emissions, representing an opportunity for carbon reduction which is yet to be fully exploited” and added: “The actions of the waste and resource management sector can be applied across economies, geographies and industrial sectors.”

Gary Crawford, Chair of the ISWA Working Group on Waste and Climate Change stated “It will require a portfolio of mitigation actions to achieve the GHG emission and short-lived climate pollutant² reductions essential to reach climate stability. The waste and resource management sector must be part of this portfolio, as it offers an immediate and cost-effective opportunity to achieve substantial cuts in global GHG emissions and SLCPs.”

¹ Sources: NASA Global Climate Change, 2015; Brussels Research Center, Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency, 2015
²Short-lived Climate Pollutants (SLCPs): SLCPs include black carbon (BC), anthropogenic methane (CH4), tropospheric ozone (O3), and many hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), which have a warming effect on climate and, some of which, are dangerous air pollutants with negative impacts on human health, agriculture and ecosystems. Methane and black carbon are the two most significant SLCPs resulting from waste management practices.
ISWA, with this Declaration on Climate Change and Waste and Resource Management commits to the following key actions: increase awareness, network for capacity building, disseminate knowledge and experience; contribute to the advancement of technical and scientific knowledge; work closely with cities from low- and middle income countries; actively participate in global events.

**ISWA calls upon governments**

One of the major commitments of ISWA is to support governments and policy-makers in establishing and implementing guidelines to mitigate the effects of climate change and foster low carbon development. Specifically, this commitment means taking into account the potential of the waste and resource management industry to reduce GHG emissions and SLCPs by integrating and prioritising appropriate management strategies in national plans and initiatives; by creating a robust agreement that provides clear, long-term and predictable legislative and fiscal frameworks; by supporting businesses and civil society led initiatives and by public investments and mechanisms to de-risk investments in green technologies.

**ISWA: Who we are and what we do**

ISWA is an international observer organisation of the UNFCCC, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. ISWA is the worldwide non-profit and non-governmental association of experts (scientists and operators) on waste and resource management and consists of more than 1,300 members in over 100 countries. The scientific and technological work is accomplished by ISWA Working Groups. The dialogue is carried out in the context of seminars, workshops and congresses which offer a large number of opportunities for cooperation between companies, councils, research facilities and universities, authorities and other specialists. ISWA has been based in Vienna, Austria, since January 1st 2009.

**Details of the declaration, goals and measures of ISWA:**

See link to ISWA’s Declaration on Climate Change and Waste and Resource Management below.

**For further information, please contact:**

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