in the know

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A Call To Action at COP 17

Waste management and recycling are key drivers of sustainable development, capable of utilizing existing technologies and best practices to promote resource conservation, reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and improve public health.




In recognition of the substantial benefits that waste management and recycling can deliver on a global scale, the International Solid Waste Association (ISWA) and its National Members have identified the following opportunities for action at the 17th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change and call upon the Parties to take swift and immediate steps in Durban, South Africa, to:

- Recognize the climate mitigation potential of waste management and recycling
- Integrate and prioritize waste management and recycling strategies in national plans and initiatives, including Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions
- Establish public-private partnerships, sector-based programs, and other international channels to disseminate best practices, attract new public and private investment in basic infrastructure, and strengthen domestic regulatory standards to maximize the climate benefits of waste management and recycling on a global scale.

Immediate and substantial reductions in GHG emissions using existing, affordable technologies

The waste management sector offers an immediate, cost-effective, and fast-acting opportunity to achieve substantial cuts in global GHG emissions.

Using existing technologies that can be deployed at scale in virtually all regions and markets, waste management can be transformed into a net carbon reducer. Countless examples across the globe show that this is a mitigation strategy ready for scale-up.

Waste prevention, recycling and reuse, biological treatment, energy recovery, engineered landfilling and other waste-related strategies are proven to result in upstream and downstream cost savings, energy efficiency improvements, public health and lifestyle benefits and above all, steep GHG emission reductions.

Improvements in health, productivity and sustainability

Rapid increases in population and urbanization are resulting in increased waste generation in developing countries. Implementing effective waste management systems in these regions can bring a wide range of environmental, economic and social benefits.

Environmental benefits

- Reduced GHG emissions generation
- Reduced environmental degradation from uncontrolled waste disposal
- Resource and energy conservation through material recovery
- Energy recovery to reduce demand on limited natural resources

Economic benefits

- Enhanced access to international financing
- Revenues from the sale of carbon credits, recovered energy, and materials
- Technical expertise and training to facilitate technology transfer and build capacity

Social benefits

- Improved sanitary and health conditions
- New jobs from construction of new facilities and projects
- Training and capacity building in support of waste management modernization
- Contribution to equity and poverty eradication

Natural resource conservation and waste minimization

Waste prevention, resource recovery, reuse and recycling can minimize environmental impacts, lower costs, and reduce potential risks and liabilities across supply chains and in product disposal.

As demand for virgin raw materials intensifies and energy demand accelerates, the capacity to recover, reuse, and recycle key materials — as well as prevent waste in the first instance — is essential to promoting economic development and maintaining competitiveness.

Sustainable long term waste strategies represent an important and growing opportunity for indirect reduction of GHG emissions through the conservation of raw materials, improved energy efficiency, and fossil fuel avoidance.

A reliable, worldwide supply of clean energy

Waste is a significant renewable energy resource whose energy value can be exploited through thermal processes, such as incineration and industrial co-combustion, utilization of landfill gas, and use of anaerobic digester biogas.

A pathway to sustainable development

Waste policies and legislation which contain precise intermediate and long-term targets, aimed at better handling of waste, act as important drivers for the reduction of GHG emissions.

In developing countries, waste management systems can play an important role in meeting both environmental and public health goals, while also promoting economic development and attracting new investment. It is critical to develop regulatory regimes in a practical and sustainable manner and tailor initiatives to account for local waste composition and quantities, infrastructure, preferences, economic resources, and climate.

Monitoring, reporting, and verification

Precise measurement of GHG emissions is critical in order to achieve reduction targets at all levels. The accurate tracking of waste, emissions, and other inputs and outputs is fundamental to enhancing performance and attracting and maintaining adequate financial and technical support.

MRV methodologies for waste management currently exist and form a valuable foundation for assessment of GHG emissions from waste activities

Technology transfer and capacity building

The waste management sector is well-positioned to promote sharing of technologies and to collaborate with both developed and developing country governments to craft projects and initiatives capable of attracting public and private financial support.

At the international level, waste management has been well-represented among methodologies available under the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) for the accrediting of emission reduction projects. More recently, the sector also has been active in the development of waste-related Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) proposals for developing countries.

NAMAs

NAMAs represent an institutional platform for developing country governments to attract financial and technological assistance in organizing large-scale mitigation programs. As the international climate change negotiations continue to progress toward a comprehensive global environmental governance regime for climate change, NAMAs are expected to play a critical role in enabling developing countries to meet domestic mitigation goals and pursue low carbon development pathways.

Waste management has proven experience and capabilities in areas broadly considered to be among the foundational building blocks of effective NAMAs:

- ✓ **Technology transfer**
- ✓ **Policy examples**
- ✓ **Sustainable development co-benefits**
- ✓ **Capacity building**
- ✓ **Monitoring, Reporting and Verification Methodologies**
- ✓ **Financing of waste management projects**

Given that the waste management sector's climate benefits rely on existing technologies and proven methodologies, it is ready today for immediate implementation via public-private partnerships and other bilateral initiatives as well as through NAMAs, sector-based approaches, and a future international climate treaty.

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