

Global Zero Waste Forum 2026

Istanbul Platform: Call to Action on Zero Waste

Preamble

Waste and resource inefficiency are accelerating environmental degradation, undermining public health, contributing to greenhouse gases emissions and increasing economic vulnerability. The burden of waste pollution is not evenly shared and is often concentrated in communities with the least capacity to absorb its impacts. At the same time, the climate case for zero waste is becoming clearer: prevention and upstream systems redesign reduce emissions across supply chains, while reducing food and organic waste cuts methane emission, providing the most effective near-term solution for global warming.

The United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution [A/RES/77/161](#), which proclaimed March 30 as the [International Day of Zero Waste](#) and underscored how optimising resource circulation and preventing waste are vital for advancing the 2030 Agenda. Driven by this UN mandate, the Zero Waste Foundation (hereafter Foundation) serves as a catalyst for building global momentum, convening actors to translate policy ambition into delivery, and strengthening cooperation with UN partners and the [UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Zero Waste](#).

Additionally, Türkiye will host COP31 in Antalya in 2026. This creates a unique opportunity to elevate zero waste from a parallel conversation into a practical climate delivery agenda. In this context, the 2026 [Global Zero Waste Forum](#) (hereafter the Forum) served as a key convening moment supporting COP31 by accelerating alignment, partnerships, and delivery readiness on the road to Antalya.

The 2026 Forum, an institutional bridge between the Foundation's multistakeholder platform and the COP31 delivery agenda, helped coordinate, consolidate and connect the Climate Action Agenda through the Istanbul Platform on Zero Waste.

The Forum further recognised the pioneering leadership of the Republic of Türkiye in elevating Zero Waste from a national initiative into a global platform for climate action and international cooperation. Participants acknowledged the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and H.E. Emine Erdoğan, together with the work of the Zero Waste Foundation, in advancing the Zero Waste vision nationally and internationally. Participants welcomed President Erdoğan's call for environmental diplomacy founded on practical implementation, recalling his observation that the Zero Waste



Forum “focused on concrete, implementable and measurable solutions” and that “the role assumed by the Forum on the road to the COP31 Conference of the Parties is of tremendous value.”

Participants further acknowledged the leadership of H.E. Emine Erdoğan in shaping Zero Waste as a transformative philosophy that extends beyond waste management to responsible consumption, resource stewardship and humanity’s shared responsibility towards future generations, recognising her call that “ahead of the summit, we propose Zero Waste as a climate action” and her conviction that “Zero Waste is the ticket for humanity’s journey back to its essence.”

The Forum also welcomed the vision of the COP31 Climate High-Level Champion to place people at the centre of implementation by mobilising governments, cities, businesses, financial institutions, youth, civil society and local communities to translate global commitments into practical and measurable action. Participants recognised the Champion’s call for a climate agenda that “moves from ambition to implementation” and delivers “solutions that improve lives and deliver measurable results for communities everywhere” on the road to Antalya and beyond.

The Zero Waste Forum presents the unique opportunity to deliver measurable progress on the Istanbul Platform on Zero Waste, aligned to the 2030 Agenda. The Forum will also take the form of regional meetings to ensure outcomes to track the implementation of voluntary partner-led commitments. This also includes national and local projects that contribute towards the implementation of Zero Waste policies, practices and incentives.

The key recommendations from the 2026 Forum address the following areas:

1.0 The Istanbul Platform on Zero Waste for Climate Action

The Istanbul Platform on Zero Waste for Climate Action is a flagship initiative under the Global Climate Action Agenda for COP31 that positions zero waste and circularity as central, cross-cutting pillars for climate action to drive stronger implementation across sectors and deliver circular and resource-efficient real-economy solutions toward measurable outcomes.

The Istanbul Platform will connect existing initiatives, coalitions and stakeholders working across food systems, cities, industry, methane reduction, nature, biodiversity, health and sustainable development. It will serve as a practical bridge between climate ambition and implementation, mobilizing governments, cities, businesses, finance, civil society, and youth and thus helping translate commitments made through the Paris Agreement, successive COP outcomes and the first Global Stocktake into tangible results on the ground. The Platform features six strategic

objectives-covering mitigation, adaptation, methane reduction, policy integration, finance mobilization, and just transitions-while supporting all six axes of the Global Climate Action Agenda.

2.0 Localising Zero Waste through effective multi-level governance that contributes to the making of resilient cities and communities.

Subnational governments are at the forefront of zero waste policy implementation that contributes to both mitigation and adaptation efforts to ensure a sustainable urban future. Mayors and local government representatives attending the 2026 Forum highlighted the challenges and solutions associated with mainstreaming zero waste principles and practices. They shared that these challenges can be remedied with more effective multilevel governance, more incentives and resources channeled to the local level; and the need for renewed focus on upstream zero waste practices.

In many parts of the world, Zero Waste principles are guiding policy and practice. However, there is a need to demonstrate the full complement through the adoption of Zero Waste Districts, which is a catalyst for city-wide implementation of Zero Waste principles. Not only limited to waste management, Zero Waste principles are relevant to energy conservation, construction methods, water preservation, food production and consumption, design and technology. Zero waste and local action are critical to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda (NUA).

3.0 Mainstreaming a people-centred approach and tangible positive impact improving lives and livelihoods.

Real-economy solutions must reach people where they are and be shaped with them, not simply delivered to them. Effective implementation of

better waste management systems and the transition towards a zero waste and circular economy approach depends on listening to communities, valuing local knowledge, respecting cultural contexts, and ensuring that those most affected by the impacts from the current linear system have a meaningful voice in designing and delivering solutions.

A people-centred approach must be at the heart of this new approach, through which solutions are strongest when designed with the participation of those they seek to serve. Women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, persons with disabilities, workers, faith groups and other historically under-represented stakeholders bring knowledge, experience and leadership that are essential to successful implementation. The continuity and conclusions from the 2026 Forum demonstrate that

inclusion is not an add-on to a just and equitable future for all—it is a prerequisite for lasting impact.

4.0 Encourage re-thinking, re-design, re-use, recycling and innovation to scale up Zero Waste & circular economy practices.

The most decisive moment for waste is upstream, at the design table. Whether a product can be re-used, repaired, recycled or only discarded is largely set long before it reaches a consumer, so scaling up Zero Waste and the circular economy has to begin with re-thinking and re-design: products, packaging and systems built from the outset to be durable, repairable, refillable and reusable, with high-quality recycling closing the loop on what genuinely cannot be kept in use. The 2026 Forum gave this concrete form, from the case for a real right to repair and moving reuse from pilots into permanent city infrastructure to shifting electronics away from a take-make-waste model.

Scaling these practices is also an economic agenda. Re-use, repair, refill, resale, refurbishment and sound recycling are fast-growing markets for entrepreneurs and small businesses and a source of local jobs. The 2026 Forum's Demo Day put that next generation of founders on stage, with start-ups from across the Global South and beyond showing that low-waste business models already work, while dedicated sessions examined how to finance the ecosystem and carry it from grants to growth capital, and how reusable packaging works at industrial scale in business-to-business supply chains. The 2026 Forum urged moving incentives, finance and policy upstream, and supporting entrepreneurs and the new global alliances forming around reuse, repair, refurbishment

and circular design so these practices reach the scale the transition requires.

5.0 Empower youth, women, indigenous and people with disabilities to deliver Zero Waste

Zero Waste and climate action can only be advanced when youth are given leadership roles, recognizing that they are not only the leaders of tomorrow, but leaders of today. In many regions, particularly across Africa, young people make up a large share of the population. They are a key demographic to engage, because they are already organizing, innovating and delivering zero waste and climate action. Working locally, their youth-led organizations reach people that formal systems miss, turn global commitments into community action, and pilot new and innovative solutions in their communities. Indigenous youth hold traditional

knowledge vital to this work, carrying priorities such as food sovereignty and the stewardship of land and soil into the COP31 process.

In line with the 2030 Agenda and the Youth 2030 UN Youth Strategy, the 2026 Forum recognizes youth and youth-led organizations as practitioners and innovators essential to the lasting implementation of zero waste and climate action. The 2026 Forum committed to move youth's engagement from participation to implementation on the road to COP31, contributing to the Global Climate Action Agenda and the COP31 Champion High-Level Champion's call to put people at the centre. To this end, youth adopted the Declaration on Zero Waste and Climate Action, setting out their COP31 priorities: a just and equitable zero-waste energy transition, food systems that cut waste and end hunger, and innovation that opens youth access to education, technology and funding. Beyond COP31, the Forum will continue to mobilize young people and empower generations of youth leaders to deliver zero waste and climate action in their communities and worldwide.

6.0 Mobilise behaviour change and public participation as a cornerstone of climate action.

Zero Waste cannot succeed through policies and infrastructure alone. Lasting transformation requires changes in behaviours, lifestyles and consumption patterns, supported by education, awareness and active public participation. Governments, businesses, communities, educators, civil society, faith leaders, the media and households and individuals at large all have a role to play in embedding Zero Waste principles into everyday life. Climate action becomes more durable when people can see it, understand it and participate in it.

The 2026 Forum welcomes the launch of the Global 50 by 30 Challenge on reducing Food Loss and Waste as a flagship initiative to mobilise people from all walks of life around one of the most practical and inclusive climate solutions. With an estimated 60 per cent of food waste occurring at the household level, reducing food waste requires collective action by families, consumers, schools, businesses, cities and communities. The Movement will encourage practical actions, behavioural change and voluntary commitments that reduce food loss and waste, strengthen food security, cut methane emissions, conserve natural resources and demonstrate how citizen action can help deliver climate goals.

7.0 Continue mainstreaming the Istanbul Platform on Zero Waste in Antalya (COP31), Addis Ababa (COP32) and beyond (COP33) by establishing strategic partnerships to mainstream zero waste regionally starting in WEOG, Africa and Asia Pacific.

Through engagement with the COP31 Presidency and strategic partnerships with the African Union, the 2026 Forum provided continuity between Antalya and Addis Ababa. The Forum highlighted the important role Africa will be playing in mainstreaming zero waste policies and practices to help deliver people-centred outcomes for cities and communities across the continent.

The Forum, in coming years, will also take the form of regional platforms that explore how zero waste policies are being implemented; what new innovations in design are being developed; and what financing mechanisms are being introduced to enhance circular economy practices in a particular region. By adopting a regional perspective, the Forum will also be able to contribute towards greater multilateral cooperation and capacity building efforts that can be shared from one region to the next.

8.0 Strengthen multilateral cooperation and partnership by working with the United Nations System to implement the recommendations of the United Nations Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Zero Waste.

The United Nations System can be instrumental in mainstreaming zero waste principles. The strong presence of the UN provides non-state actors with the opportunity to contribute towards policy-making, particularly on how zero waste can be integrated within food production, energy efficiency, green construction and other circular economy practices.

At the 2026 Forum, the UN regional office for Türkiye also provided opportunities to engage the business community by ensuring that private sector partners who are members of the UN Global Compact share their expertise in the facilitation of financing zero waste projects. Other UN partners like UN-Habitat, UNEP and the UN Volunteers are also partners

with the Foundation to help implement Zero Waste and Circular Economy initiatives, such as the Halve Food Waste by 2030 initiative.

9.0 To continue supporting partners improve capacity for project preparation and to facilitate the private sector and multilateral development banks convert/match concessionary financing with impact investments.

Accelerating implementation towards a Zero Waste approach requires a stronger pipeline of bankable, investment-ready projects. As presented during the 2026 Forum, innovative solutions already exist but too often they struggle to reach implementation because project preparation capacity remains limited. The Foundation will therefore work with governments, cities, NGOs, businesses and partners to strengthen project preparation, build technical capacity and help develop robust pipelines of

high-impact projects capable of attracting finance and delivering measurable climate, resilience and development outcomes.

Engagement with multilateral development banks, development finance institutions, philanthropic organizations, institutional investors and the private sector will also be a focus, to better align concessional finance with private and impact investment. Improving collaboration across the financing ecosystem, can help de-risk investments, mobilize larger volumes of capital and accelerate the deployment of practical climate solutions where they are needed most.

10.0 To lead the origination, development and implementation of Zero Waste Districts as the Foundation's flagship initiative.

Zero Waste Districts is another Foundation's flagship project inspired by the ideas, innovations and commitments made by partners at the 2026 Forum. It is a vehicle translating aspirations into infrastructure on the ground. It works directly with subnational governments at the district level to move away from collection-and-disposal towards prevention, separation at source, reuse, repair and the composting that closes the biological cycle, building local capacity rather than adding another layer of coordination. The 2026 Forum showed both the appetite and the readiness for this: mayors from every region set out how they are already implementing zero waste, and city networks convened specifically around the cities that can deliver it.

The programme gives participating cities a clear direction of travel: at least 70% diversion from landfill by 2030, and 90% by 2040. A first cohort spanning every region will turn these targets into measurable, financed projects, anchored by work already under way in Mexico City, Kisumu and

Penang, and designed to grow into a global programme reaching one hundred countries. Translating that ambition into delivery depends on finance and capacity actually reaching the local level, the gap that the 2026 Forum's sessions on municipal financing and capacity building put squarely on the table.

Istanbul Platform serves as an open invitation to cities, development finance institutions and technical partners to join this first cohort. Many of the cities and financiers needed to make it work were already in the room; the task now is to move them from commitment to signed, funded district projects.