



ZERO WASTE FORUM

Concept Note

Zero Waste Forum

by the Zero Waste Foundation,

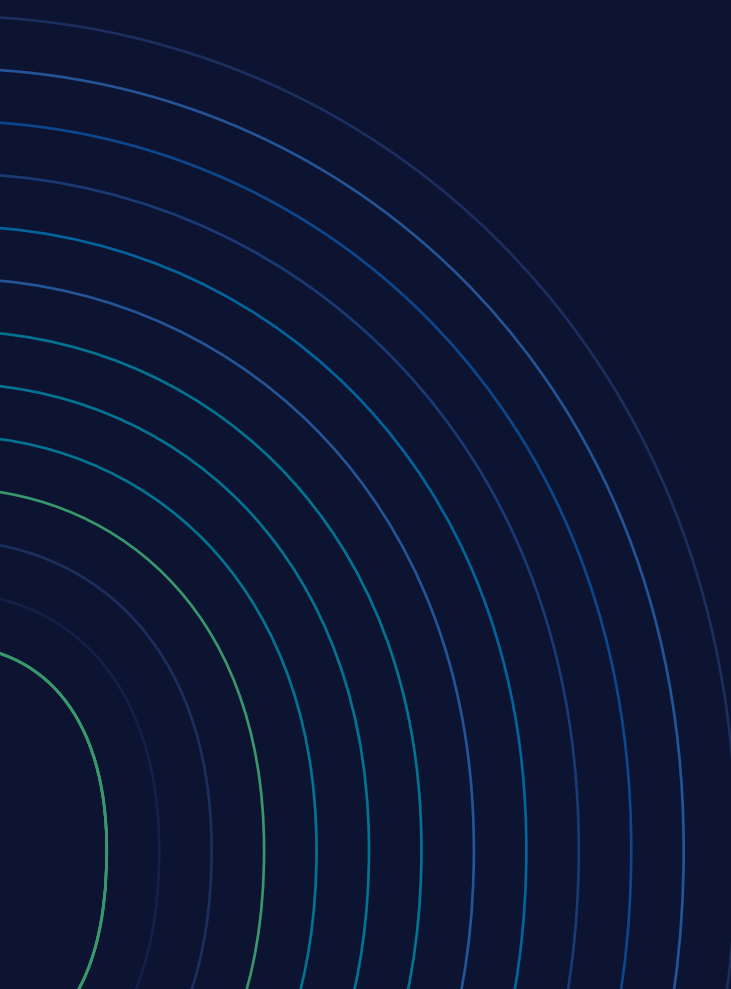
In cooperation with the Zero Waste Foundation,

the Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Environment,

Urbanization and Climate Change, and

the Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Agriculture and
Forestry

Istanbul, Türkiye, 17–19 October 2025



Background

Every year, humanity generates between 2.1 billion and 2.3 billion tonnes of municipal solid waste. Without urgent action, the annual waste generation will hit 3.8 billion tonnes by 2050. Waste pollution threatens human health, costs the global economy hundreds of billions of dollars every year, and aggravates the triple planetary crisis: climate, nature, land and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste.

The United Nations General Assembly, on 14 December 2022 adopted resolution A/RES/77/161, to promote zero-waste initiatives to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and recognize the best practices with positive impact on improving the living environment. The above resolution designates 30 March as International Day of Zero Waste, to be observed annually.

Pursuant to the above United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/77/161, the Secretary-General has set up an advisory board of eminent persons, based on voluntary contributions of their time, selected on the basis of their knowledge, experience and expertise and with due regard to gender balance and equitable geographic representation, in consultation with Member States, for a period of three years, to promote local and national zero-waste initiatives through, inter alia, the dissemination of best practices and success stories, based on the work of, and without duplication with, relevant existing regional and global platforms, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), within their respective mandates.

Subsequently Mrs. Emine Erdoğan, First Lady of the Republic of Türkiye and the Patron of the zero-waste movement established the Zero-Waste Foundation to promote the core functions of the above mentioned United Nations General Assembly resolution.

The Zero Waste Forum is therefore an opportunity to reaffirm commitments, provide input, and demonstrate best practices in furtherance of the United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/77/161 and the work of the Advisory Board.

About the Zero Waste Foundation

Since its founding in 2023, the Zero Waste Foundation has been actively engaging with the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Zero Waste as well as the Zero Waste secretariat, including UN-Habitat and UNEP. Meetings have also been organized with civil society organizations, local government networks, climate change practitioners, and other partners to ensure an inclusive engagement process to gather views and ideas to shape the Foundation's advocacy and promotion efforts in furtherance of the resolution.



The Zero Waste Foundation has also demonstrated its presence at the last two Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings of the UNFCCC, particularly in Dubai (2023) and Baku (2024), highlighting the critical role of waste management in efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including CO₂ and methane. The Foundation is also actively engaging local government networks in all major regions to ensure its advocacy work is translated into action on the ground through local government partners.

As part of its core functions in promoting zero waste living and taking into account, the role of the United Nations Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Zero Waste, the Zero Waste Foundation is organizing an international forum entitled, Zero Waste Forum under the theme Zero Waste in Action: People. Places. Progress to promote and advocate Zero Waste living. The Forum will take place over three days 17-19 October 2025 in Istanbul, Türkiye.

The Forum will be a gathering of the willing, a space for those who are already taking action, those who are ready to lead by example and those who refuse to accept inaction as an option. It is a meeting point for the doers: city leaders, community organizers, innovators, and partners across sectors who are shaping the future of Zero Waste on the ground.

While organizing any international event brings the challenge of managing its own waste footprint, the Forum will embrace this reality as a learning opportunity. The Forum will foster in-person unexpected encounters, accelerate trust-building, and generate new forms of collaboration that virtual spaces often limit. At the same time, the Forum will serve as a living laboratory, offering practical insights into how the various activities can progressively reduce waste generation that comes with it and thereby, demonstrating that imperfection is not a barrier to commitment, but a starting point for action.

By focusing on Zero Waste Living, the Forum will offer a timely opportunity to reaffirm and strengthen multilateral cooperation and Zero Waste commitments at global, regional, and local levels. It will bring together practitioners, city managers, the private sector, and civil society to exchange innovations and best practices, and to co-create pathways for scaling up Zero Waste efforts worldwide.

¹ The Board was formed to promote local and national zero-waste initiatives through awareness-raising, promotion of local and national zero-waste initiatives, and dissemination of best practices and success stories towards implementation of United Nations General Assembly resolution 77/161.

Why another gathering on Sustainability

Across the globe, numerous meetings, gatherings and conferences focus on various aspects of waste management—from recycling systems and circular economy strategies to waste treatment technologies and policy development. These events often address professionals in the public and private sectors, highlighting advancements in infrastructure, regulation, and innovation related to the waste lifecycle.

While such gatherings play a crucial role in driving the technical and policy dimensions of waste management, many of them stop short of addressing the root causes of waste generation occasioned by our consumption patterns, lifestyle choices, and societal norms. The increasing urgency of the above mentioned triple planetary crisis namely, climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, calls for a complementary approach that moves beyond managing waste after it is created, and instead focuses on preventing its creation altogether.

This is where the Zero Waste Forum stands apart from other gatherings. Rather than concentrating solely on the systems that manage waste, the Forum will explore how people, communities, and cities can transform the way we live, consume, and relate to materials. It will foster inclusive, multi-level coalitions that connect grassroots innovation, city leadership, and global policy frameworks to co-create a future rooted in Zero Waste principles.

International Forum on Zero Waste Living

Zero Waste Living is more than a strategy—it is a cultural and behavioural shift that redefines our relationship with materials, consumption, and the environment. It calls for individuals, households, and entire communities to adopt lifestyles that reduce waste at its source, promote conscious consumption, and prioritize reuse, repair, and regeneration over disposal.

It is the hope that partnering with The United Nations Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Zero Waste, along with UN-Habitat and UNEP, will be strategic co-designing sessions, sharing global insights and data, and contribute to aligning the Forum outcomes with the broader UN agenda on sustainable development, climate action, and urban resilience. Dedicated spaces, both within the Forum program and exhibition areas, will be made available for UN organization and other participants to engage, present flagship initiatives, and foster new partnerships.

The Forum will serve as a global platform to translate Zero Waste policies into concrete local actions, foster inclusive partnerships, and promote practical solutions that reflect the realities of both high-income and resource-constrained settings.

In contrast to traditional waste management meetings and conferences, the up-coming Forum will embrace a multi-level and multi-stakeholder approach, bringing together:

- Zero Waste practitioners and community leaders
- Activists and grassroots movements
- Mayors and municipal decision-makers
- Startups and social enterprises
- Corporations are committed to sustainable production.
- NGOs, UN agencies, and development partners
- Vulnerable communities often most affected by waste pollution.

In other words, the Forum's primary audience will comprise of local government leaders, grassroots innovators, startups, civil society organizations, researchers, and UN and development partners who work to implement waste prevention strategies. By engaging actors across all levels, including from households to multilateral institutions, the Forum aims to foster synergies between practice and policy.

The Forum will build on the momentum of International Zero Waste Day, jointly organized by UNEP and UN-Habitat with the support of the Zero Waste Foundation, and aligns with upcoming meetings such as of local governments such as ASEAN Mayors Forum.

The Forum will offer space for real-world exchange and bold initiatives. Participants will explore and co-create pathways to:

- Translate Zero Waste policies into practice at the household, city, and national levels
- Scale up innovations and best practices from diverse contexts, including the Global South.
- Mobilize financing for inclusive and locally driven Zero Waste initiatives.
- Build partnerships that span sectors and regions, turning shared goals into sustained action.

Why It Matters

Zero Waste Living provides a means to break the cycle of waste by addressing its root causes and empowering communities to lead the transition. It's a call for tangible, scalable, and culturally relevant solutions that go beyond technical fixes and go into solutions that are socially just, economically viable, and environmentally sound.

By gathering a broad coalition of actors in Istanbul, the Forum aims to reaffirm global solidarity, recognize the leadership of vulnerable communities, and accelerate the transition towards a world where waste is no longer inevitable, but preventable.

Expected Outcomes

- A strong reaffirmation of Zero Waste Living as a critical pathway for environmental and social resilience, acknowledging the specific needs and contributions of vulnerable communities, and supported by key stakeholders across civil society, the private sector, and financing institutions.
- Identification of priority areas for multilateral collaboration, including waste diagnostics, policy transformation, access to financing, capacity building, and the exchange of practical knowledge and innovations across regions and sectors.
- A shared commitment to robust follow-up mechanisms that ensure the implementation of zero waste strategies, transforming words into sustained action and long-term impact at local, national, and global levels.

In addition to fostering dialogue and collaboration, the Forum will generate a set of substantive outputs, including a non-binding Zero Waste Living undertaking, a summary report of key innovations and practices, and a curated selection of case studies from participating actors. These outputs are intended to serve as reference materials for stakeholders and possibly inform the Secretary-General's Report on Zero Waste to the UN General Assembly in 2026.

The International Zero Waste Award

The Forum will also feature the inaugural Zero Waste International Award, recognizing an individual or organization demonstrating exceptional commitment to advancing Zero Waste Living.

The Award will be presented during the closing session and aims to celebrate leadership, innovation, and impact—particularly from underrepresented or emerging contexts.

Theme

The theme of the Forum will be

1. Zero Waste in Action: People. Places. Progress.

Important Considerations for Participation

- **Date and Location:** Istanbul, Turkiye in 17-18-19 October 2025.
- **Virtual Options:** The forum will be fully virtual format, making it accessible from anywhere in line with waste prevention.
- **Networking Opportunities:** The Forum will feature a range of stakeholders, including policymakers, researchers, and industry professionals, providing valuable networking opportunities.
- **Workshops and Exhibitions:** Will the Forum feature workshops, exhibitions, and presentations that can enhance knowledge and offer insights into the latest developments in Zero Waste Living.



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