

Defining Zero-Waste: What Does Zero-Waste Really Mean

The term “zero-waste” is gaining traction across governments, companies, and communities worldwide, but what does it truly mean in practice? Too often, the concept is misunderstood as simply recycling more or sending less waste to the landfill. In reality, zero-waste is about re-designing systems, shifting behaviours, and transforming the way we produce and consume to prevent waste at its source.

This session will bring together leaders from diverse geographies and sectors to explore the meaning of zero waste and why definitions matter. By examining diverse interpretations and practical applications, the discussion aims to establish a common ground that is rigorous enough to drive real change yet flexible enough to be applied across different contexts.

This session will ask:

- What should be the defining principles of zero-waste in the 21st century?
- How can we ensure that “zero-waste” avoids becoming an empty slogan and remains a measurable, actionable goal?
- How can different regions and sectors adapt the concept to their own realities without diluting its impact?

° 14:00 - 15:00 °

° Friday, October 17, 2025 °

Defining Zero-Waste: What Does Zero-Waste Really Mean

Moderator: Saleem Ali (UN, University of Delaware)

Shri Pushyamitra Bhargav (Mayor Indore, India)

Ambily Adithyan (GAIA)

Jeffrey Sachs (Columbia University)

Tim Breker (Vytal)