



MEDIA RELEASE

Delegates share solutions toward a zero-waste future at WasteCon 2018

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Key role players in the waste and environmental management industries gathered at the Emperor's Palace in Johannesburg for the 24th biennial WasteCon conference and exhibition which took place from 15 to 19 October 2018. WasteCon is the flagship event of the Institute of Waste Management of Southern Africa (IWMSA), and this year speakers and delegates were encouraged to engage around the conference theme of "Implementing the Waste Hierarchy".

"Presentations and workshops sparked numerous discussions on how we can find solutions for the waste management problems we collectively face by focussing on waste avoidance and reduction, re-use, recycling, recovery and ideally, as the last port of call the treatment and disposal of waste," says Leon Grobbelaar, President of the Institute of Waste Management of Southern Africa (IWMSA).

Some highlights from the event include:

Connecting the Waste Hierarchy and a Circular Economy

In his keynote address Doctor Ad Lansink, the Dutch founder of the Ladder of Lansink, suggested that a fundamental requirement in the roadmap to a Circular Economy is to be risk averse, seeing that we face so many environmental risks globally. Some of the most impeding risks being population growth, raw material scarcity, and political and economic stability. According to Dr Lansink some of the key challenges to implementing the Waste Hierarchy and transitioning to a Circular Economy are:

- Closing loops in several sectors and on various levels of the waste management industry.
- Developing new technologies.
- Creating shared financial and behavioural values and principles.
- Establishing shared responsibility between producers, consumers, and government.
- Creating extended (specifically global) support.
- Decoupling the economy from the environment.
- A firm transition towards renewable energy.

"A transition to a Circular Economy can reduce emissions by 56% by 2050," explained Dr Lansink.

Waste: The Ugly Reality Facing Africa

“Standing in front of you today, I realise that my first professional presentation was on the WasteCon podium 20 years ago. This led me to ponder whether the waste management industry has changed, or whether we are still stuck in old ways of thinking and implementation when it comes to waste management practices in southern Africa and the rest of our continent,” said Professor Linda Godfrey, Manager of the Waste Research, Development, and Innovation (RDI) Roadmap’s Implementation Unit of the Department of Science and Technology. “How do we fast track the change to a Circular Economy?”

Prof Godfrey was part of the research and development of the Africa Waste Management Outlook (AWMO) conducted under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Environmental Technology Centre (IETC), and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). The report was published on World Environment Day on 05 June 2018, and the initial need for such a report to be conducted on the African continent arose from the lack of waste management data that can be scaled down to a regional level. The AWMO report addresses:

- Where are we, as Africans, in terms of waste management?
- What are the governance issues?
- What are the impacts of waste on the continent?
- Possible tailor-made opportunities and solutions to move from our current state to the desired state of waste management in Africa.

“Some of our findings point to challenges such as the existence of inadequate measures to manage new and changing waste streams, and inadequate transport infrastructure which has a huge impact on the quality of food by the time it reaches the end consumer,” she explained. “In response to these challenges we often see a “knee-jerk” reaction to ban products due to these and other challenges, rather than implementing measures to address the challenges. As an example, we see Polyethylene terephthalate (PET) bottles and containers being banned which, in the context of freshwater security across the African continent, can have detrimental impacts on communities,” she continued. Prof Godfrey further suggested that the sad reality is that “many African dumpsites are filled with reusable materials and no plan for diversion because of a lack of the will to do so.”

She reiterated that by no means is the African picture all “doom and gloom”, as she highlighted many wonderful examples from Africa and southern Africa which showcase the inherent entrepreneurial and innovative spirit of our continent’s people. Among these examples are the We Cycles project which originated in Nigeria; and the Rethaka Foundations’ Repurpose Schoolbag Initiative, Bio2Watt, and Agri Protein, which are three South African based projects. Ultimately, waste management solutions that are relevant and sustainable within the African context will be key to realising the vision of a Circular Economy on our continent.

A Namibian Case Study

Gys Louw, CEO of the Namibian recycler and waste management company Rent-A-Drum, is one of the current pioneers of zero waste to landfill and shared with delegates an impressive video showcasing

Namibia's first Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) facility. It is projected that this facility will provide up to 12 000 tonnes of RDF annually for use in manufacturing processes at Ohorongo Cement, one of the most modern cement plants in the world.

Walking the Talk in terms of Green Conferencing

The IWMSA is proud to share that they implemented the following initiatives to reduce WasteCon 2018's waste footprint:

- The use of 100% recycled paper for the conference programme.
- Conference presentations were loaded onto a complimentary memory stick for each delegate, and sponsors and exhibitors were recognised in the conference's unique mobile app instead of on printed paper.
- Each delegate was supplied with their own glass water bottle that they could refill at designated water stations around the venue.
- No conference bags were supplied, and delegates were encouraged to bring their own bag.
- Food waste was pre-processed on site, at Emperor's Palace, and then removed from the venue for further composting.

To bring the message that waste is in fact a resource closer to home, the leftover food from the conference was collected, measured, and shared during the closing sessions of the event. A total of 64% of the food waste generated during the conference was pre-processed and thereafter removed for composting.

The conference officially concluded with three technical tours on Friday, 19 October 2018. "We are glad that we were able to provide delegates with the opportunity to experience waste management practices in action at the Tufflex Plastic Products, Geocycle, and Mpact operational sites," said Grobbelaar.

"We hope that the content and benchmarks shared at WasteCon 2018 will be carried forward by delegates to ensure that we win the war against waste one day at a time and secure a sustainable environment for generations to come," he concluded.

For more information visit the WasteCon 2018 [website](#). To find out more about the Institute of Waste Management of Southern Africa visit www.iwmsa.co.za. You can also follow IWMSA on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/iwmsa>) and Twitter (<https://twitter.com/IWMSA>).

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3. Gys Louw. 2018. [Presentation] Striving towards Zero Waste to Landfills in Namibia.
4. Sally-Anne Käsner. 2018. [Presentation] Waste Hierarchy – Circular Economy: Design waste out?