



# A JOINT EUROPEAN AND AFRICAN RESEARCH & INNOVATION AGENDA ON WASTE MANAGEMENT

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES ON TURNING WASTE INTO A RESOURCE

*Brussels, 25 November 2013*

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## **Joint Statement**

### Background

Waste Management has become a priority for Africa and Europe.

The Rio+20 Summit stressed the potential of green economy as a means to achieve sustainable development and poverty eradication. In this context, the international community is working on the definition of sustainable development goals that may help tackling these challenges. The importance of adopting a life cycle approach, and of further development as well as implementation of policies for resource efficiency and environmentally sound waste management was also recognised in the Rio+20 conclusions.

In Africa, waste management practices also tend to differ vastly between African countries and between rural and urban areas. It is estimated that the average waste generation in Africa is approximately 230 kg per capita per year, while research shows that 56% of urban municipal solid waste is biodegradable, including food waste, where the collection coverage reaches 20%-50% of the population. In rural areas there tends to be no waste management infrastructure and collection service. Landfill seems to be the major waste treatment mechanism.

The expected growing population of the African continent together with the rapid annual urbanisation rate of 3.5% over the past two decades will affect its cities in many ways, including their waste management planning, making it more complex and difficult. Changes in the population consumption patterns, due to the emerging middle class, are also expected to increase waste generation. The need for sustainable management of waste is identified by African nations as an emerging urban challenge as well as an opportunity.

The European Union generates around 500 kg of municipal waste per capita per year. Overall municipal solid waste generation reached 253 million tons in 2011. The 2011 data on municipal waste showed that 40% of the treated municipal waste was recycled or composed, 37% landfilled, 23% incinerated, 25% recycled and 15% composed. Landfill is still the dominant treatment but the EU plans to reduce landfilling to 35% by 2020.

In Europe, recycling and other material recovery operations are expected to increase from the current level of 36% to around 50% by 2020, while energy recovery used 17% of municipal waste in 2004 is likely to increase to about 25% by 2020.

Based on this, in 2012, the European Parliament launched a Pilot Project “Recovering critical raw materials through recycling - an opportunity for the European Union and African Union” and asked the Commission, in particular DG Research and Innovation, to implement it.

The project carried out two events, firstly in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and secondly in Brussels, Belgium. The Project events gathered more than one hundred participants from more than 28 different African and European countries representing Industry, Research and Academia as well as Governmental bodies. It was an

opportunity to exchange best practice and identify common challenges as well as future research and innovation needs. The initiative tries to develop the basis for a solid cooperation between Europe and Africa around innovation priorities that will benefit both continents. The objective is to build a “Joint European and African Research and Innovation Agenda on Waste Management” paving the way to win-win European-African partnerships in Waste Management.

### Joint Statement

Taking into account the discussions and conclusions from the workshop on “Waste as a resource: Recycling and recovery of Raw Materials” held on 24-25 June 2013 in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) and from the High Level Conference on “Economic Opportunities on Turning Waste into a Resource”, held on 25 November in Brussels (Belgium),

the participants recognise that for both continents:

- Waste represents a valuable resource and a priority to be tackled,
- Waste Management (including recycling and recovery of raw materials) is a shared challenge bringing clear benefits for the environment, economy, employment and society,
- Research and Innovation is essential to unlock the potential for Waste Management,
- Opportunities for cooperation between Africa and EU in Research and Innovation exist and go beyond technological innovation: new business models and managerial, organisational and social innovation,
- This cooperation should involve a multi-stakeholder approach: governments, private sector, municipalities, academic institutes and citizens.

The participants identify:

Common priorities to be tackled in cooperation such as local innovation, mapping and tracking waste streams and components, developing public private partnerships, exploring management structures to integrate informal sectors, developing strategies for capacity building through research, and experience sharing.

The participants welcome:

A “Joint European and African Research and Innovation Agenda on Waste Management”, that could be implemented together mobilising institutional, technical, financial resources and all stakeholders including business, industry and research/academia.

The participants invite:

The relevant decision-makers in Europe and Africa to take these conclusions into consideration and to support a “Joint European and African Research and Innovation Agenda on Waste Management”.