



PRESS RELEASE

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Waste to Power – Why Recycling Must Be a COP30 Priority

For immediate Release. London, November 19th 2025 - Waste is a story about the loss of power more than merely an environmental crisis, according to the Global Recycling Foundation.

As we discard valuable resources, those countries which are focusing on advanced recycling processes will dominate.

Speaking to mark the opening of COP30, the UN's climate change conference in Brazil, Ranjit Baxi, founder of Global Recycling Foundation and Global Recycling Day, said: "Waste is a valuable currency. In time it will be more precious than land or oil because we are squandering the materials upon which the world is increasingly relying – copper, lithium, nickel and aluminium.

"While so many countries are content to export their waste in the name of recycling, the wise operators are capturing those scarce resources and will begin to demand a high price if we want to continue to drive our electric vehicles, expand our windfarms or use our smart phones."

Ranjit Baxi believes precious minerals are likely to become 'weapons of power'. He said: "China, once the factory of the world, has turned its focus inward — no longer satisfied with making cheap products, it now seeks to dominate the supply chains that sustain green technology. Through massive investment in recycling infrastructure and control over critical mineral processing, China is positioning itself not just as a manufacturer, but as the gatekeeper of the future. While the West has embraced recycling, it is falling behind China in the most advanced systems and practices. It will surely cost us dearly in the very near future."

Baxi said he first attended CO22 in 2016 in Morocco when he pointed out the need for recycling to be part of the COP agenda and has subsequently been reminding COP conferences ever since. Unfortunately, he notes, to date this has not happened.

He said: "We continue to remind the powers that be of the need to recognise the immense contributions made by the recycling industries in helping to mitigate the climate crisis while recovering critical minerals. Why is that an industry that saves billions of tons of carbon emissions, adds billions to global GDP, employs millions providing green jobs and reduces methane emissions by reducing landfill waste, is still not on the COP agenda?"

Research suggests that more than £148 million of critical and precious materials reach recyclers each year, with most of the gold, silver and platinum being recovered overseas. It suggests that the UK alone is losing at least £13.64 million of critical raw materials due to the lack of advanced recovery technologies (www.materialfocus.org)

Most precious metals are lost through e-waste. Approximately **\$91 billion** worth of metals were embedded in e-waste in 2022, with only around \$28 billion worth recovered. It is clear that recovering these materials from waste streams – ‘urban mining’ - can be more cost-effective and less environmentally damaging than traditional mining.

COP30, held on the edge of the Amazon Forest, once again failed to attract many world leaders. Recycling was not a dominant topic for debate, but Global Recycling Foundation saw it as another missed opportunity.

Climate change, bringing with it an ever-increasing story of floods, fires and tropical storms, is worsening. Small steps are being taken towards achieving the challenge of Net Zero (global temperature of 1.5C enshrined in the Paris Agreement in 2015), but the UN secretary general, Antonio Guterres, acknowledged that it was inevitable that humanity would overshoot the target with “devastating consequences.” In the meantime, few recognise the economic potential of sophisticated waste recycling operations.

The Global Recycling Foundation believes that the **economic potential of sophisticated recycling technology** is substantial spanning direct financial gains, resource security and long-term sustainability advantages. The recycling technology market is projected to surpass **\$150–200 billion by 2030**, driven by urbanisation, Environmental, Social and Governance mandates, and resource scarcity. If we can reduce dependence on imported critical minerals (e.g., lithium, cobalt), recycled materials can protect industries against global raw material price volatility.

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Notes for editors: **About the Global Recycling Foundation**

The Global Recycling Foundation supports the promotion of recycling and the recycling industry across the world in order to showcase its vital role in preserving the future of the planet. It promotes Global Recycling Day as well as other educational programmes, awareness projects and innovation initiatives which focus on the sustainable and inclusive development of recycling.