

## **Joint industry statement on the role of co-processing in sustainable waste management**

The undersigned organisations recognise that waste and its management are presenting great challenges for society and our planet. Mismanagement of waste where it is dumped in streets, openly burned, or ends up in rivers and oceans can cause immense damage to the natural world and real hazards for many communities. Even where there are systems in place to manage waste, it can often end up in landfill sites, with the biological and chemical breakdown of the waste negatively impacting the soil and emitting methane, a greenhouse gas even more impactful on the climate than CO<sub>2</sub>.

### **The challenge of waste management is growing worldwide**

Waste from human and industry activity is estimated to account for 11.2 billion tonnes every year and decay of the organic proportion of solid waste is contributing to about 5% of global greenhouse gas emissions. By 2050, with current practices, uncontrolled municipal solid waste will double to 1.6 billion tonnes<sup>1</sup>. This will further contribute to climate change, marine plastic pollution, and adverse health effects.

### **The cement industry can play a role in sustainable waste management**

We recognise that the cement industry can make a substantial and positive contribution in tackling the challenge of non-recyclable and non-reusable waste through energy and mineral recovery in the process known as co-processing.

In this waste management process, waste is used to replace fossil fuels in heating cement kilns, while any remaining ashes are recycled into the building material compound itself, making it a zero-waste solution. This integrated process maximises the environmental value of waste treatment and lowers the demand for new disposal infrastructure.

Co-processing is recognised as an environmentally sound waste management practice around the world, from Europe to India, LatAm to North America. It is carried out under strict regulations and technical guidelines that ensure safety, emissions control, and operational transparency.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> UNEP (2024): Global Waste Management Outlook 2024. <https://www.unep.org/resources/global-waste-management-outlook-2024#:~:text=Key%20findings,USD%20108.5%20billion%20per%20tonne>

<sup>2</sup> Basel Convention:

<https://www.basel.int/Implementation/TechnicalMatters/DevelopmentofTechnicalGuidelines/TechnicalGuidelines/tabid/8025/Default.aspx> (Accessed September 2025)

### **Stronger policy support can unlock the full potential of co-processing**

Its potential can be enhanced further with efficient regulatory measures and policies, supporting the uptake of co-processing across the world.

We call on international stakeholders and national and municipal governments to support these efforts by calling for and delivering policies that will:

- recognise co-processing as a sustainable waste management method - providing simultaneous energy recovery and material recycling - in waste policy frameworks;
- incentivise collection, sorting and pre-treatment of waste at municipal level to ensure quality and consistency of waste streams, encouraging recycling of the recyclable material and the co-processing of non-recyclable material
- enable environmental permit-issuing at the cement plants to get access to suitable waste;
- count the materials' content (ash) effectively recycled through co-processing towards national recycling targets;
- provide fiscal incentives acknowledging the environmental benefits of co-processing waste in a cement kiln to create a level playing field with other waste management and energy options;
- create public-private partnerships for co-processing to allow risk-sharing and ensure long-term sustainability;
- encourage knowledge transfer and policy alignment across regions to unlock the full potential of co-processing as a sustainable waste management solution.

We believe co-processing is an effective and sustainable solution for our global waste challenge and can truly transform waste into purpose.

### **Signatories:**

