

Mr Samed Agirbas President of the Zero Waste Foundation on International Zero Waste Day

Community Action needed to tackle global waste challenge

ISTAMBUL, TURKEY, March 30, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On International Zero Waste Day, the global waste challenge has reached unsustainable proportions. According to the United Nations, the world generates between 2.1 billion and 2.3 billion tonnes of municipal solid waste every year. The global direct cost of managing this waste is a staggering USD 252 billion. The indirect cost resulting from pollution and poor waste management is USD 361 billion. By 2050, it is estimated that most cities will run out of landfills and the direct cost of waste management globally will reach over USD 500 billion annually.



Some 2.7 billion people lack access to solid waste collecting leading to open dumping and environmental risks. In fact, waste pollution impacts human health, strains economies and leads to biodiversity loss and pollution. Supporting the United Nations Secretary-General's Advisory Group on Zero Waste, the Foundation is galvanising global support and establishing a network of like-minded governments and cities to adopt Zero Waste practices.

In the case of Turkiye, we generate more than 30 million tons of municipal solid waste every year. This is equivalent to about 400 kg per person. Whilst the Zero Waste Movement started in Turkiye, critical challenges remain. The waste collection rate in the country is 77% and the country has very sound policies. However, the illegal dumping of waste material remains a major challenge.

In 2022, H.E. Mme Emine Erdogan, the First Lady of Turkiye, and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres signed the Global Zero Waste Goodwill Declaration. The initiative has since grown into an international movement involving over 62 countries with 10,000 signature of prominent

persons.

What we need is stronger collective action at the local level to deal with waste management challenges. The Zero Waste Foundation, which was established to advocate for an all of society approach starting from individual responsibility and action, have established strategic partnerships in all regions of the world.

Through our partnership with Kuala Lumpur, for example, we are fostering knowledge exchange and capacity building between Turkiye and Malaysia. We support Kuala Lumpur City' Hall's Zero Waste initiative that aims to reduce the city's waste footprint from an estimated 1.4 million tonnes to 563 thousand tonnes per-year by 2040.

Other than food waste, another major source of pollution is textile and fashion. According to the United Nations, the world produces 92 million tonnes of textile waste. This means a lorry load of clothing is incinerated every second. Taking into account the tremendous pressure of the fashion and textile industry, particularly its advertising and branding machinery, the United Nations decided to focus on the theme of Textile and Fashion Waste this year.

At the Zero Waste Foundation, we call upon the fashion and textile industry to adopt sustainable policies to ensure the durability and quality of products. It goes beyond corporate social responsibility and makes good business sense to invest in the long term resilience of local communities particularly indigenous communities so that we can support circular economy practices. Only then will fashion be truly fashionable.

About Zero Waste Foundation

The Zero Waste Foundation was established in 2023 under the auspices of Emine Erdoğan, the wife of the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The foundation operates with the aim of promoting the Zero Waste Project and ensuring its sustainability. It strives to foster an environmentally conscious society by encouraging individuals and institutions to embrace the zero-waste philosophy.

The foundation's primary objectives include raising awareness about zero waste, encouraging the exchange of knowledge and experience, and developing and disseminating best practices in this field. To achieve these goals, the foundation conducts extensive activities in areas such as education, research, project development, and implementation.

To ensure the adoption of zero-waste practices in all areas, the foundation collaborates with public institutions, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations. Additionally, it aims to create a global impact by promoting zero-waste initiatives at the international level.

<https://sifiratikvakfi.org/en/about-us>

About Samed Agirbas

Samed Ağırbaş was born in 1994 in the Fatih district of Istanbul. He completed his master's degree in Business Administration and Finance at Mississippi State University. He is currently continuing his doctoral studies at the University of Massachusetts.

Ağırbaş, who was elected as the President of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Youth Assembly in 2014, also assumed the roles of President of the Union of Turkish Municipalities Youth Assembly and the World Humanitarian Summit Youth Working Group. He was Special Advisor to the Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-HABITAT) and UN-HABITAT Eastern Europe and Central Asia Advisor, Ağırbaş ensured coordination of relations between UN member countries and UN agencies during his term and also led various projects. He continues his active duty at the United Nations.

Currently acting as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees and Board of Directors of the Zero Waste Foundation, Ağırbaş, who acts with the desire to be a visionary at national and international levels with sustainability, environment and youth works, speaks advanced level English and beginner level Portuguese.

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