



An initiative of the
Bureau of International Recycling

Recycling: The Seventh Resource Manifesto

Global Recycling Day – 18 March 2018

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Foreword

by **Ranjit S. Baxi**, President, Bureau of International Recycling

Since I first announced my vision of a Global Recycling Day at the inauguration of my Presidency of the Bureau of International Recycling (BIR) at the 2015 World Recycling Convention in Dubai, I have been championing its arrival. So it is with a particular sense of pride that the first Day will take place on 18 March 2018 – the 70th anniversary of BIR.

18 March will be a day dedicated to the future of our planet and a day that will showcase the pivotal role that the recycling industry plays in its future, and the immense contributions the industry makes to save over 700 million tons of carbon emissions annually which helps support climate change goals.

This will not only be a day about fun, though fun will undoubtedly be had. This is a day that will truly recognise that recycling is too important not to be a global issue.

It is a day to showcase that whoever and wherever we live on this great planet, whether we are the humblest individual or the greatest leader, the responsible use of the materials around us, the better understanding of how they are used and dispatched, and the championing of recycled goods from the plastics in our home to the metals in our buildings, is a collective, and global, concern.

The Seventh Resource, and the message behind it is, I believe, one of the most important messages to come from the worldwide recycling industry. Our primary resources are precious, and finite. It is our duty to use them wisely, and preserve them where we can. By naming recycled materials as “resource” we are giving them their proper title; recyclables are as important, if not more, than all the primary resources we have here on earth.

Let this, the first Global Recycling Day, show the world the power of the Seventh Resource, a resource as precious as, and more sustainable than all the others.

Ranjit S. Baxi



Introduction

by **Dr Katharina Kummer Peiry**, Kummer EcoConsult, former Executive Secretary of the Basel Convention

The launch of Global Recycling Day in 2018 by the Bureau of International Recycling (BIR) is an excellent and long overdue initiative. Having worked in international waste management policy for nearly 30 years, I am convinced that treating waste as a valuable resource is the way forward.

However, for a long time, it has been difficult to get this idea across. Waste was an unattractive topic and remained at the bottom of the agenda for years. When it did receive attention, it was perceived as a problem: the illicit dumping in poor countries of hazardous wastes from the industrialized world gave rise to policy frameworks restricting transboundary movement. This approach also inspired the 1989 Basel Convention.

Promoting legitimate, clean and profitable recycling can reduce illicit waste dumping. The first step is to see “waste” as a valuable resource for which a market exists. In this sense, the core message of Global Recycling Day that recyclables are the Earth’s seventh resource is right on target.

During my tenure as Executive Secretary of the Basel Convention from 2007 to 2012, my vision was to see “waste” transformed to “resource”. The emergence of new waste streams and the expansion of consumer societies since the negotiation of the Basel Convention provided both reason and opportunity for this.



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In hindsight, I recognise that policy makers at that time were not quite ready to move from containing waste to promoting it as a valuable resource. The NGO community feared the 'greenwashing' of dirty operations in developing countries. They branded me 'industry friendly' and accused me of undermining the objectives of the treaty while heading its secretariat.

Today, six years later, the idea of waste as a valuable resource has been broadly embraced by both policy and industry. We have woken up to the idea that we need to use waste as a resource if we want to save the world from drowning in it. I like to think that my contribution to shaping the 10-year Strategic Framework for the Basel Convention and its 2011 Cartagena Declaration on the Prevention, Minimization and Recovery of Hazardous Wastes and Other Wastes helped lay the groundwork for this.

And yet, the idea is not new. The 3Rs – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle - have been around for many years. So has the Waste Hierarchy, which establishes the order of preferred operations regarding waste management (prevention, reuse, recycling, disposal). The concept of sustainable development has been broadly embraced since the adoption of Agenda 21 in 1992.

But despite all this, recycling has not received much attention over the past few decades. This is where Global Recycling Day comes in. Launched by BIR, it can build on the surge of policy interest in the Circular Economy and related concepts. Through the many activities planned at global, national, regional and local levels, it will create a positive image of recycling to the broader public as well as government authorities. I am excited to be part of the effort, and hope it can help bring my vision closer to becoming a reality.

Dr Katharina Kummer Peiry





The solution to one of the most
fundamental and urgent problems currently
facing our planet is
right on our doorstep...



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Of the earth's natural resources, we tend to think of SIX as the most important:



Water



Air



Oil



Natural gas



Coal



Minerals



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These resources represent the **foundation of our very existence**. All our food, all our sustenance, all our belongings ultimately come from these six elements. Today, humanity **can't survive without them**.

These resources **power** the homes we live in, **construct** the phones and laptops we use to communicate; they **manufacture, package** and **deliver** the food we eat and **form the fibres** of the clothes we wear.

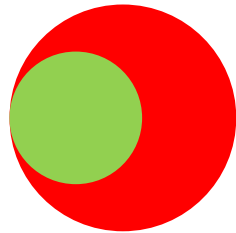
The list of what they give us is **endless**.





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But these resources **are finite...**
They're **rapidly** running out...
And once they're gone, they're gone **forever.**



In 2017, we used a year's worth of the earth's natural resources in just seven months*.



The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations predicts that, by 2025, 1.8 billion people will be living in regions with absolute water scarcity*.

*Source: WWF and Global Footprint Network



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Global coal demand will exceed supply in an estimated 114 years.*



Every year about 18m hectares of forest – an area the size of England and Wales – is felled. In just 40 years, possibly 1bn hectares, the equivalent of Europe, has gone.**



Every year we extract 55 billion tons of bio-mass, fossil energy, metal and minerals from the earth.***



This is almost 10 tons on average for every person in the world. And for people in the western world this number is much higher.

*Source: IB Knowledge - Imperial College Business School ** Global Forest Watch *** OECD Environmental Outlook to 2030



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We are **carelessly using** the earth's natural resources without thinking about what will replace them, while billions of tons of waste **pour into landfill** sites every year



Every year we dump a massive 2.12 billion tons of waste. If all this waste was put on trucks they would go around the world **24 times**.



According to the World Bank in 2012, urban population produced about 1.3 billion tonnes of Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) which is expected to grow to **2.2 billion tonnes** in 2025.

By 2100, the World Bank estimates, the growing global urban population will be producing three times as much waste as it does today.



Continuing to strip the earth of its finite resources is threatening our very existence...

Yet there is a simple solution...





A Seventh Resource



RECYCLING

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The Seventh Resource
isn't finite...

it can be used again
and again
and again.

Sometimes indefinitely...





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It helps combat climate change...

Each and every year, the Seventh Resource (recyclables) saves over 700 million tonnes in CO₂ emissions.*

The Seventh Resource offsets
all CO₂ emissions
generated by the aviation industry annually.*

*Source: Based on study conducted by the Bureau of International Recycling





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...boosts local employment around the world...

Approximately **1.6 million people worldwide**
are employed in processing recyclables.*

The annual contribution of the recycling industry towards the
global GDP is projected to **exceed \$400 billion** in the
next 10 years.*

\$20 million dollars is invested each year by the industry into
**job creation, improving recycling efficiency
and environmental impact.***

*Source: Bureau of International Recycling





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...but **most importantly**,
it helps conserve the earth's six
precious **primary resources**.

Humans have consumed
more resources in the last 50 years
than in all previous history.*


The **Seventh Resource** (recycled materials)
supplies **40%** of the world's raw material needs.**

* Planet Aid **Source: Bureau of International Recycling





And it has been **on our doorstep** for the whole time, pouring into our rubbish bins, garbage cans, waste mountains and landfill sites every second.



By rethinking what we
throw away, we have the
power to change the
world.

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Yet the power of recyclables is **still** not sufficiently recognised as a solution at a global level.

And the earth is **bearing the consequences.**



91% of the plastic created **isn't** recycled.*



Americans recycle 34 percent of all the waste they create, according to the latest report from the Environmental Protection Agency.

63%

The best national recycler is Austria, which recycles 63% of its used products every year.**

* "The Production, Use, and Fate of all Plastics Ever Made" - Science Advances ** Planet Aid



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Urgent action is needed to **unite behind a global approach** to recycling.

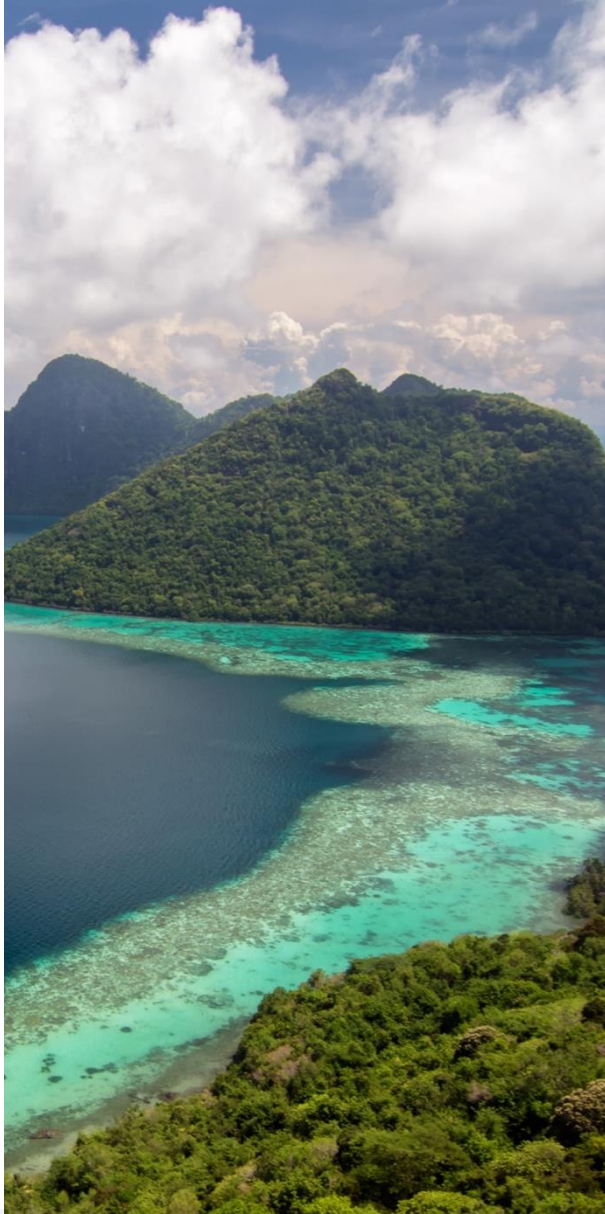


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Recyclables **must** be seen as the precious
Seventh Resource...

Not something useless to be discarded.



It's time we put the planet first.

We're extending
seven concrete
challenges to
world leaders to
make better use
of the **Seventh
Resource**....

1. **Implement and strengthen international agreements** that promote recycling, and negotiate new ones as needed.
2. Support and promote the **sustainable trade of recyclable materials** to ecologically sound companies across the globe.
3. **Educate**, from the grass roots up, the public on the critical necessity of recycling.
4. Agree to a **common language** of recycling (same definitions, same messages).
5. Make recycling a **community** issue, supporting initiatives which help households and businesses provide Seventh Resource materials for repurposing.
6. Work with the industry to encourage '**design for recycling**' in the reuse of materials – reducing waste and integrating 'end-of-life' functionality at the design stage.
7. Support **innovation, research** and **initiatives** that foster better recycling practices.

And we're
challenging
individuals
around the world
to – where
possible – ask
**seven key
questions** about
their own use of
the **Seventh
Resource...**



1. Do I **dispose** of everything I have used (from plastic bottles to refrigerators to cars) properly, so it can be recycled?
2. Do I know my **municipality's policies** on recycling and do I follow them?
3. Do I know **what happens to my recyclables** once they are taken away by my local municipality?
4. Do I, my family and my friends, **mend, repair** and **reuse** in order to sustain the usefulness of the items around us for as long as possible?
5. Am I committed to producing **as little waste** as I can?
6. Do I know how, and do the brands that I buy make it easy for me, to make the right '**recycling friendly**' purchasing decisions?
7. Am I sufficiently aware of my **government's recycling legislation**, or should I be demanding more?



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No more excuses and no more delays.

These changes are **urgent** and **non-negotiable** if we want to retain the earth's natural resources and ensure the future of our planet.





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Join our mission...

Learn, Sign, Do

- **Learn** about the recycling industry globally and locally through local BIR members and action groups.
- **Sign** the [change.org](https://www.change.org) petition to show the UN and world leaders the concrete steps that needed to be taken to make recycling a truly global concern.
- **Do** join in **Global Recycling Day** on 18 March, and share good practice on social channels across the globe.





The final word

by **Philippe Chalmin**, Professor of Economic History at Paris-Dauphine University,
Chairman of CyClope commodity markets research group

For centuries, the human race held a sense of scarcity; resources were rare, and to be treasured, because demand nearly always outweighed supply. Everything available had to be used and almost nothing was thrown away. As a necessity, man was in control of his own recycling.

Two centuries of industrial revolution, however, reversed that state of affairs.

Economic development was based on the voracious use of non-renewable resources, and mankind reveled in their access to an abundance of goods. Relentless manufacture and consumption, un-tempered by the need to preserve or reuse, grew at a rapid pace until the end of the 20th century. The explosion of population density, the growth of mega-cities and our continued consumerism has led to serious issues in urban waste management.

In the 21st century it is clear that our planet is reaching its limits in terms of resources. A world home to over 10 billion people by the end of the century must take tight control of its limited resources - be they fossil fuels, minerals, land and forests. And of course we have to take better care of our atmosphere - already suffering so much from ever-rising carbon emissions.



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The time is for change. Time, once again, to embrace scarcity. Time to, as our forefathers did, search for new resources from what we produce every day.

Many people think that we should put strict limits on our production of waste. This might be appropriate for the most advanced economies, where the production of waste per capita is already slightly declining as is economic growth. The fact is, however, that waste production is a part of economic life.

Waste is like dirt. You can ask a child to keep his clothes clean, but he won't run or play outside for fear of getting dirty. Dirt is good! It's a part of life. And the same can be said of waste, the production of which is fast growing in emerging and developing countries and where its management is becoming a key economic opportunity.

The issue across the globe is to transform what we see, misguidedly, as waste into resource. And this is the inspiration behind BIR's "Seventh Resource" campaign. By aligning recyclables to primary resources, BIR is giving it value – be it through energy, biomass or, of course, recycling.

Among the many, many, challenges of the 21st century the alchemist's dream is as real as it ever was. To complete the material cycle, to turn waste in to resource, is our collective and ultimate goal!

Prof. Philippe Chalmin



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