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IPEN Intervention on Waste-to-Energy (WTE)

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The conversion of waste to energy (WtE) is currently being promoted as a source of ‘green and renewable’ energy while reducing the amount of municipal waste that ends up in landfill. While it does appear attractive to be able to convert solid waste into energy, the reality is that much of the mooted WtE technology involves the *incineration* of waste, resulting in toxic air emissions and ash residues for a questionable amount of energy production. As delegates know, waste incinerators can produce toxic air pollution including dioxins and furans, hexachlorobenzene (HCB), PCBs and brominated dioxins. WTE incinerators also emit nanoparticles and toxic heavy metals and acid gases. According to the incinerator industry, most incinerators generate 1 tonne of contaminated ash for every 4 tonnes of waste burned. This includes smaller volumes of highly toxic ‘fly ash’ and larger volumes of less toxic ‘bottom ash’. There is no market for incinerator ash and it must be disposed of to landfill. Finally, waste burning facilities produce far more carbon dioxide per unit of energy generated than coal, oil or gas fired power stations. We urge caution for Parties considering WtE as a solution to their municipal waste problems.