

Ghent, 20 February 2020

SUEZ inaugurates the Valomet industrial unit: a European pioneer in the recovery of ultra-fine metal particles from household and industrial waste

Today, Jan Jambon, Flemish Minister-President, and Jean-Marc Boursier, SUEZ Chief Operating Officer, inaugurate the largest unit in the European Union for the extraction and recovery of ultra-fine non-ferrous metal particles from bottom ash. The Valomet unit in Ghent's port area, North Sea Port, will offer a second life to the metal particles previously untapped.

Small objects containing metal, such as ballpoint pens and chip cards, include a number of components that end up in household waste. SUEZ produces secondary materials and green energy from this waste. The bottom ash (residual waste from the energy-from-waste process) is mainly recovered for use as a underlay for road and runway building.

The Valomet unit: innovation for the circular economy

SUEZ transports bottom ash from some fifty European energy-from-waste plants managed by the Group in Europe to its processing plant in Grimbergen. An ultra-fine fraction is extracted: a concentrate of non-ferrous metal made up of particles of between 0 and 20 mm.

Today, using the innovative Valomet process developed in-house, SUEZ is going one step further by recovering mainly aluminium, copper and a residual minerals from this fraction. The aluminium and copper are then reintroduced into the production process through foundries and metal refineries in Belgium and in Europe. The residual minerals are returned to the Grimbergen plant to be recovered again.

With a €1 million support from the Flemish government, the new plant marks a key step for the circular economy in Flanders and Europe. By recovering bottom ash, the process helps to protect natural resources. The Valomet process recovers copper and aluminium using 80 and 95% less energy respectively than traditional mineral extraction processes, thereby also reducing CO₂ emissions.

Jan Jambon, Flemish Minister-President, says: *"The circular economy offers great opportunities for our industry and society. Valomet is a good example."*

Jean-Marc Boursier, SUEZ Chief Operating Officer, adds: “The recovery of residual waste into new secondary raw materials plays a key environmental role by reducing waste volumes and protecting the planet’s natural capital. Supported by the Flemish government, this innovative European project further strengthens SUEZ’s position throughout the waste recovery chain and adds value to the fine metal particles contained in bottom ash. The pilot project, which began in 2014, extracted 1,300 tonnes of non-ferrous metal a year. From 100 tonnes of household and industrial waste, we extract at the end of the process 200kg of pure aluminium, 50kg of pure copper and 21 g of precious metals.”



From left to right: Jean-Marc Boursier, SUEZ Chief Operating Officer, Jan Jambon, Flemish Minister-President, and Eric Trodoux, Chief Operating Officer of SUEZ Recycling and Recovery Benelux & Germany inaugurate in Ghent an industrial plant that recovers ultra-fine metal particles from bottom ash.

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About SUEZ in Belgium

In Belgium, SUEZ Recycling and Recovery collects, processes, recycles and recovers waste and materials. The company provides a range of standard and customised services for approximately 48,000 companies and organisations. It employs 1,900 people and operates 45 plants in Belgium. The SUEZ mission is to protect and preserve our natural resources. Every day, we recover more and more materials from your waste. This is the commitment made by SUEZ. Find out more at www.suez.be

About SUEZ

With 90 000 people on the five continents, SUEZ is a world leader in smart and sustainable resource management. We provide water and waste management solutions that enable cities and industries optimize their resource management and strengthen their environmental and economic performances, in line with regulatory standards. With the full potential of digital technologies and innovative solutions, the Group treats over 45 million tons of waste a year, produces 4.4 million tons of secondary raw materials and 7.7 TWh of local renewable energy. It also secures water resources, delivering wastewater treatment services to 66 million people and reusing 1.1 billion m³ of wastewater. SUEZ generated total revenues of 17.3 billion euros in 2018.

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SUEZ

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