Plastic Pollution

Selected Online Resources

Every day, the equivalent of 2,000 garbage trucks full of plastic are dumped into the world's oceans, rivers, and lakes.

Plastic pollution is a global problem. Every year 19-23 million tonnes of plastic waste leaks into aquatic ecosystems, polluting lakes, rivers and seas.

Plastic pollution can alter habitats and natural processes, reducing ecosystems' ability to adapt to climate change, directly affecting millions of people's livelihoods, food production capabilities and social well-being.

Source: https://www.unep.org/plastic-pollution

UN Entities

- **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**
  - Plastic Pollution: https://www.unep.org/plastic-pollution
    - What you need to know about the plastic pollution resolution (2 March 2022): https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/what-you-need-know-about-plastic-pollution-resolution
  - Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution: https://www.unep.org/inc-plastic-pollution
  - Law and Plastics Toolkit: https://leap.unep.org/en/knowledge/toolkits/plastic
    A global resource to help countries take comprehensive action, including through legislation, to address plastic pollution.
  - UNEP Plastics Initiative: https://www.unep.org/topics/chemicals-and-pollution-action/plastic-pollution/one-plastics-initiative/about-unep-plastics
  - Beat Plastic Pollution Campaign: https://www.unep.org/beatpollution/beat-plastic-pollution
  - Clean Seas Campaign: https://www.cleanseas.org/
  - InforMEA - United Nations Information Portal on Multilateral Environmental Agreements: https://www.informea.org/
- **Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal**
  - Plastic Waste Amendments: https://www.basel.int/Implementation/Plasticwaste/Overview/tabid/8347/Default.aspx
- **Global Partnership on Plastic Pollution and Marine Litter (GPML)**
  https://digital.gpmarinelitter.org/
  The Global Partnership on Plastic Pollution and Marine Litter (GPML) is a multi-stakeholder partnership that brings together all actors working to prevent plastic pollution and marine litter. By providing a unique global platform to share knowledge and experience, partners can collaborate to create and advance solutions to this pressing global issue.
- **UN Environment Management Group (EMG)**
  - Task Team on Marine Litter and Microplastics: https://unemg.org/marine-litter-and-microplastics/

- **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)**
  - Sustainable use and management of plastics in agriculture: https://www.fao.org/climate-change/areas-of-work/plastics-in-agriculture/en
- **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)**
  - NUTEC Plastics - IAEA's flagship initiative: https://www.iaea.org/services/key-programmes/nutec-plastics
  - Pollution - Coastal and Marine - Plastics: https://www.iaea.org/topics/coastal-and-marine/plastics
- **International Maritime Organization (IMO)**
  - Hot Topics - Marine Litter: https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Pages/marinelitter-default.aspx
  - FAQ - Plastic pellets: https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Pages/FAQ-Plastic-pellets.aspx
- **United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)**
  - Organic residues: A sustainable solution to plastic pollution and development (27 November 2024): https://unctad.org/news/organic-residues-sustainable-solution-plastic-pollution-and-development
- **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**
  - Chemicals and Waste Hub – Plastic Pollution: https://www.undp.org/chemicals-waste/plastic-pollution
  - Plastics 101: A quick guide to the global plastics negotiations: https://www.undp.org/plastics-101
  - Why UNDP is tackling the developmental dimensions of plastic pollution: The burdens disproportionately affect the vulnerable (20 June 22024): https://www.undp.org/blog/why-undp-tackling-developmental-dimensions-plastic-pollution
  - Why aren't we recycling more plastic? (28 November 2023): https://stories.undp.org/why-arent-we-recycling-more-plastic
  - What do plastics have to do with climate change? (15 November 2022): https://stories.undp.org/what-do-plastics-have-to-do-with-climate-change
  - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
  - Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC): https://www.ioc.unesco.org/
  - Microplastic: https://www.ioc.unesco.org/en/microplastics
  - Ocean Literacy Portal: Ocean plastic pollution an overview: data and statistics (9 May 2022): https://oceanliteracy.unesco.org/plastic-pollution-ocean/
- **United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)**
  - Plastic pollution and disasters: https://www.undrr.org/implementing-sendai-framework/sendai-framework-action/plastic-pollution-and-disasters
- **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)**
  - Children's Environmental Health Collaborative - Spotlight Risk – Plastic: https://ceh.unicef.org/spotlight-risk/plastics
- **United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)**
  - Addressing the challenge of Plastic Pollution with Circular Economy practices: https://www.unido.org/plastic-circular-economy
- **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**
  - Unwaste - Tackling waste trafficking to support a circular economy: https://www.unodc.org/unwaste
  - UNODC-WCO Container Control Programme (CCP)- Plastic & Hazardous Waste: https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/ccp/activities/plastic-and-hazardous-waste.html
- **UN Tourism (UNWTO)**
  - Global Tourism Plastics Initiative: https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development/global-tourism-plastics-initiative
- **World Health Organization**
  - Plastics and health initiative: https://www.who.int/initiatives/plastics-and-health-initiative

- **World Trade Organization (WTO)**
  - Dialogue on Plastics Pollution and Environmentally Sustainable Plastics Trade (DPP): https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/ppesp_e/ppesp_e.htm
    - Plastics Dialogue explores cooperation, standards and harmonization of trade measures (13 February 2025): https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news25_e/ppesp_14feb25_e.htm
- **World Bank**
  - How the World Bank Group is addressing marine plastic pollution: https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/how-the-world-bank-group-is-addressing-marine-plastic-pollution

UN Conferences & Observances

- Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution - Fifth Session (INC-5), Part one, 25 November - 1 December 2024, Busan, Republic of Korea: https://www.unep.org/inc-plastic-pollution/session-5
  - Plastic pollution negotiations adjourn with new text and a follow-up session planned (Busan, 2 December 2024): https://www.unep.org/inc-plastic-pollution/media#PressRelease2Dec
- International Day of Zero Waste, 30 March: https://www.un.org/en/observances/zero-waste-day
- World Environment Day, 5 June: https://www.un.org/en/observances/environment-day
  - 2025 – "Ending plastic pollution": https://www.worldenvironmentday.global/2025-updates
  - 2023 - "Solutions to plastic pollution": https://www.worldenvironmentday.global/about/history/2023
- World Cleanup Day, 20 September: https://www.un.org/en/observances/cleanup-day

Selected Statements and Speeches by UN Officials

- Closing in on an end to plastic pollution / Speech delivered by Inger Andersen for the 2025 Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum (23 January 2025): https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/speech/closing-end-plastic-pollution
- One step closer to a meaningful plastic pollution treaty / Speech delivered by Inger Andersen for The fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (1 December 2024): https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/speech/one-step-closer-meaningful-plastic-pollution-treaty
- Secretary-General urges countries to agree on Global Treaty to End Plastic Pollution at Busan Summit (SG/SM/22475, 25 November 2024): https://press.un.org/en/2024/sgsm22475.doc.htm
- A thousand days of negotiation, a thousand plastic pollution-free years / Speech delivered by Inger Andersen for the INC-5 Opening Plenary (25 November 2024): https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/speech/thousand-days-negotiation-thousand-plastic-pollution-free-years
- 'We are choking on plastic', Secretary-General tells Intergovernmental Committee, calling for ambitious agreement to end plastic pollution (SG/SM/22433, 30 October 2024): https://press.un.org/en/2024/sgsm22433.doc.htm
- History beckons as plastic pollution deal draws closer / Speech delivered by Inger Andersen for the Galvanizing momentum for the Global Plastic Pollution Instrument (26 September 2024): https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/speech/history-beckons-plastic-pollution-deal-draws-closer
- Global community must stand as one, work towards legally binding treaty to end plastic pollution, Secretary-General stresses, in Message for Zero Waste Day (SG/SM/22171, 20 March 2024): https://press.un.org/en/2024/sgsm22171.doc.htm
- Consequences from plastic pollution catastrophic, but solutions possible 'if we act now', Secretary-General stresses in Message on World Environment Day (SG/SM/21818, 31 May 2023): https://press.un.org/en/2023/sgsm21818.doc.htm

Selected UN Documents & Publications

- Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, 1 December 2024 - CHAIR'S TEXT: https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/46710/Chairs_Text.pdf
- **A/HRC/DEC/56/117**: Plastic pollution implications for the full enjoyment of human rights: decision / adopted by the Human Rights Council on 11 July 2024: https://docs.un.org/A/HRC/DEC/56/117
- **A/76/207** (22 July 2021): Implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes : note / by the Secretary-General: https://docs.un.org/A/76/207
  User-friendly version: https://sway.office.com/rOv56UKP8BlkCHu1?ref=Link
  Transmits report of the Special Rapporteur, Marcos Orellana, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 45/17. Examines the current and future negative implications of the various stages of the plastics cycle for the enjoyment of human rights.
- Further UN documents on "Plastics": https://tinyurl.com/3tb7x4hb

- Generation plastic: Unpacking the impact of plastic on children (UNICEF, November 2024): https://www.unicef.org/reports/generation-plastic
- Navigating Plastic Management: Tools for Government Action Planning (World Bank, November 2024): https://hdl.handle.net/10986/42450
- Combatting plastic pollution for sustainable development: A snapshot of UNDP's work in 12 countries (UNDP, November 2024): https://www.undp.org/chemicals-waste/publications/combatting-plastic-pollution-sustainable-development-snapshot-undps-work-12-countries
- Plastic pollution and disaster risk reduction (UNDRR Issues Paper, March 2024): https://www.undrr.org/publication/plastic-pollution-and-disaster-risk-reduction
- Plastic Tobacco Filters: A problematic and unnecessary plastic impacting the environment and human health (UNEP Perspective series Issue No. 45, 1 February 2024): https://www.unep.org/resources/perspective-series/issue-no-45-plastic-tobacco-filters-problematic-and-unnecessary
- An Opportunity to End Plastic Pollution: A Global International Legally Binding Instrument (UNEP Perspective series, Issue No. 44, 12 September 2023): https://www.unep.org/resources/perspective-series/issue-no-44-opportunity-end-plastic-pollution-global-international
- Hazardous exposures to plastics in the world of work (ILO, September 2023): https://www.ilo.org/publications/hazardous-exposures-plastics-world-work
- Chemicals in Plastics - A Technical Report (UNEP, May 2023): https://www.unep.org/resources/report/chemicals-plastics-technical-report
- Turning off the Tap : how the world can end plastic pollution and create a circular economy (UNEP, May 2023): https://www.unep.org/resources/turning-off-tap-end-plastic-pollution-create-circular-economy
- Plastic Pollution: The pressing case for natural and environmentally friendly substitutes to plastics (UNCTAD, April 2023): https://unctad.org/publication/plastic-pollution-pressing-case-natural-and-environmentally-friendly-substitutes
- People and Plastics: The Profile, Vulnerabilities, and Role of Informal Waste Workers in Addressing Marine Plastics Pollution (World Bank, March 2023): https://hdl.handle.net/10986/41193
- Leaving no one behind: How a global instrument to end plastic pollution can enable a just transition for the people informally collecting and recovering waste (UN-Habitat / NIVA, 2022): https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2022/11/un-habitat_niva_report_leaving_no_one_behind.pdf
- Dietary and inhalation exposure to nano- and microplastic particles and potential implications for human health (WHO, August 2022): https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240054608
- Plastics in agriculture – an environmental challenge (UNEP's Foresight Brief, August 2022): https://www.unep.org/resources/emerging-issues/plastics-agriculture-environmental-challenge
- Where Is the Value in the Chain? Pathways out of Plastic Pollution (World Bank, 2022): https://hdl.handle.net/10986/37285

- Enabling concerted multilateral action on plastic pollution and plastics substitutes (UNCTAD, December 2021): https://unctad.org/publication/enabling-concerted-multilateral-action-plastic-pollution-and-plastics-substitutes
- Plastics Toolbox: Business, Human Rights, and the Environment (UNEP, August/November 2021): https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/39576/plastics_Toolbox.pdf
- From Pollution to Solution: A global assessment of marine litter and plastic pollution (UNEP, October 2021): https://www.unep.org/resources/pollution-solution-global-assessment-marine-litter-and-plastic-pollution
- Drowning in Plastics: Marine Litter and Plastic Waste Vital Graphics (UNEP, October 2021): https://www.unep.org/resources/report/drowning-plastics-marine-litter-and-plastic-waste-vital-graphics
- Addressing Single-Use Plastic Products Pollution using a Life Cycle Approach (UNEP, June 2021): https://www.unep.org/resources/publication/addressing-single-use-plastic-products-pollution-using-life-cycle-approach
- Tackling Plastic Pollution: Legislative Guide for the Regulation of Single-Use Plastic Products (April 2021): https://www.unep.org/resources/toolkits-manuals-and-guides/tackling-plastic-pollution-legislative-guide-regulation
- Microplastics in drinking-water (WHO, August 2019): https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241516198
- Microplastics (UNEP, May 2019): https://www.unep.org/resources/report/microplastics
- Single-use plastics: A roadmap for sustainability (UNEP, March 2018): https://www.unep.org/resources/report/single-use-plastics-roadmap-sustainability
- Biodegradable Plastics and Marine Litter: Misconceptions, concerns and impacts on marine environments (December 2015): https://www.unep.org/resources/report/biodegradable-plastics-and-marine-litter-misconceptions-concerns-and-impacts

Further information

- UN Climate Action - What is the UN doing to end plastic pollution? What can you do? https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/climate-issues/plastics
- Waste without borders (UNRIC, 16 September 2024): https://unric.org/en/waste-without-borders/
- Celebrity videos call for action on plastic waste pollution (1 July 2022): https://www.un.org/en/delegate/celebrity-videos-call-action-plastic-waste-pollution
- Exhibit - In Images: Plastic is Forever (2021): https://www.un.org/en/exhibits/exhibit/in-images-plastic-forever
- **UNCTAD Database: Trade in non-plastic substitutes:** https://unctadstat.unctad.org/datacentre/dataviewer/US.NonPlasticSubstsTradeByPartner
  This database is tracking international trade in non-plastic substitutes. Such materials can be minerals, wood pulp, or natural fibres like cotton, bamboo and seaweed. They can be used to make more environmentally friendly versions of the shopping bags, utensils, wrappers and other plastic products we consume daily. The database allows users to track evolving patterns of global trade in non-plastic substitutes based on export values reported by member states.

Non-UN sources

- #EUBeachCleanup - Global campaign for clean, plastic-free oceans https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/eu-beach-cleanup_en
- River Cleanup https://www.river-cleanup.org/en