

# CAKAMUN

United Nations Environment Programme

(UNEP)

“Taking Measures to Prevent Global Plastic Pollution”



United Nations  
Environment Programme



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## INTRODUCTION TO AGENDA

From the 1950s to the 1970s, only a small amount of plastic was produced, and as a result, plastic waste was relatively manageable. However, between the 1970s and the 1990s, a plastic waste generation more than tripled, reflecting a similar rise in plastic production. In the early 2000s, the amount of plastic waste we generated rose more in a single decade than it had in the previous 40 years. Today, we produce about 300 million tonnes of plastic waste every year. That's nearly equivalent to the weight of the entire human population.

The advent of plastic revolutionized every aspect of human existence; plastics can be found on the international space station, in medical equipment, in educational materials, and in arguably every job and livelihood on the planet. Yet, decades of overuse and a surge in short-lived, single-use plastics, have led to a global, environmental catastrophe. Up to 12 million tonnes of plastics are being swept into the oceans annually and gyres, or so-called 'islands of plastic', are blossoming.

While most plastics are expected to remain intact for decades or centuries after use, those that do erode end up as micro-plastics, consumed by fish and other marine wildlife, quickly making their way into the global food chain. Indeed, micro-plastics have been found everywhere from the Arctic to the Swiss mountains and others. It has become abundantly clear that the issue of single-use plastics has led to a global crisis, the scope and scale of which is only now becoming evident.

For this reason, the President of the UN General Assembly has included the issue of plastic pollution as a priority during the 73<sup>rd</sup> session. Working together with the Member States, UN agencies, civil society groups, and the private sector, President Espinosa intends to support efforts that help reduce plastic consumption, raise awareness, and support efforts to find global, regional, and local solutions.

## 10 COUNTRIES PRODUCING THE MOST PLASTIC WASTE

Plastic waste is one of the biggest problems facing our world today. It has become the greatest concern of younger generations and one of the most important environmental and ethical issues of our time. Single-use plastics such as food packaging, plastic bags, and beverage bottles are filling our world's landfills and oceans at an increasing rate, and they simply cannot be degraded fast enough. What's more, instead of decreasing, plastic production is doubling every 11 years or so, which means the plastic waste problem is getting bigger. Not surprisingly, the richest countries produce the largest amounts of plastic, and the problem of waste is directly related to wealth.

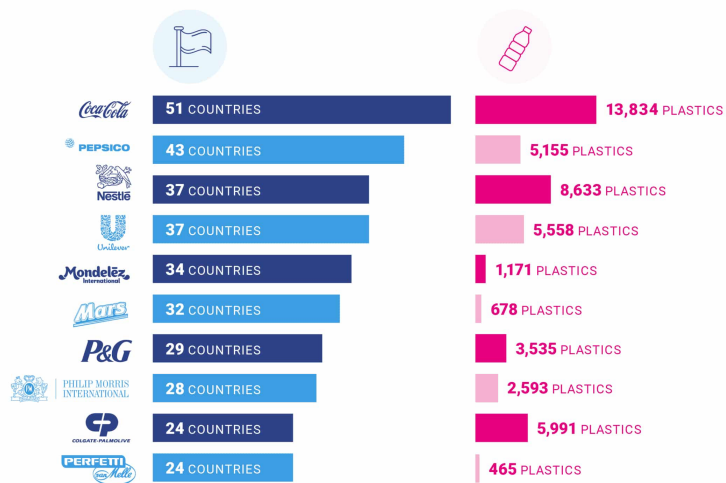
## COUNTRIES LEADING IN PLASTIC PRODUCTION

The country that produces the most waste is the United States. In second place is the United Kingdom. Americans produce an average of 105 kg of waste per capita per year, compared to 98.66 kg in the

United Kingdom. These staggering figures show how extremely much plastic waste is thrown away every year. All this plastic, which usually has an extremely long shelf life, is dumped in landfills or accumulates in the world's oceans, creating an ever-increasing waste problem around the world.

### THE 10 WORST POLLUTERS

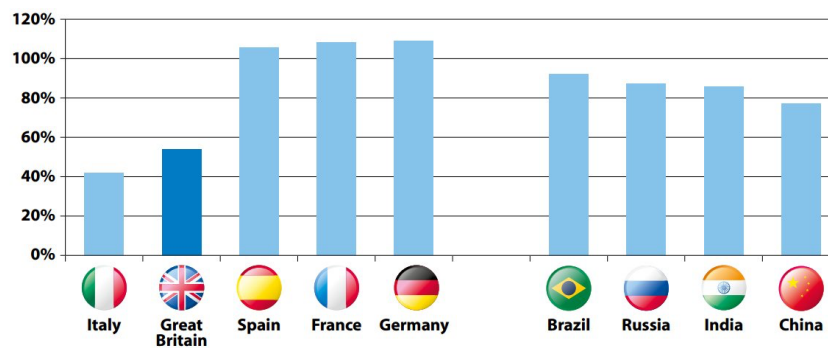
Number of countries in which waste was found and pieces of waste recorded.



SOURCE: BREAK FREE FROM PLASTIC | © PLASTIC SOUP FOUNDATION

These two countries are followed by South Korea and Germany, also rich countries that produce large amounts of plastic waste. Collectively, the world produces about 300 million tons of plastic every year, and authorities are simply running out of "safe" places to dispose of it. Of those 300 million tons, an estimated 8.8 million end up in the ocean.

**Country by country plastics production vs. consumption**



These wealthiest countries and global business leaders have little to no incentive to eliminate plastic (at least from a financial perspective). Although there are programs in place to discourage consumers from buying or using single-use plastic, it is nearly impossible to avoid using plastic in any form in everyday life simply because of the sheer scale and depth of plastic's integration into the world's systems. These giants, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and South Korea, use plastics because they are easy, cheap, and convenient. Until the use of plastics changes on a systemic level, it will be very difficult for the average citizen and consumer to completely eliminate them from their lives.

## **THE RECYCLING ISSUE**

One of the most misunderstood systems, especially plastic waste reduction, is recycling. It is generally assumed that excess plastic can be easily recycled and the problem of waste is all but solved. Unfortunately, this is not the case.



UK lecturer in international relations at Cardiff College's School of Law and Politics, Jennifer Allan, notes that despite producing hundreds of millions of tons of plastic, only about 9% of it is successfully recycled. This means that there are still hundreds of billions of tons of plastic that can not or will not be turned into anything else and instead remain as waste until their final decay. Recycling, in essence, is not worth it. Plastics are so varied and diverse that while metals and glass can be easily recycled, plastics must be sorted through a sometimes complicated process and usually a large perimeter. And even then, once plastics are sorted, they are not always usable, are challenging to recycle, and can rarely be reused. There is very little demand for recycled plastic, and the cost of recycling is not worth it for most companies and the global economy. Therefore, the plastics remain.

### **MAKING CHANGES**

However, some countries are fighting this excessive use of plastic with varying degrees of success. While recycling programs may work to some degree, the crux of the problem lies in the sheer volume of plastic used - not just in these ten countries but around the world. From the plastic manufacturers to the companies that buy it, use it in their packaging, etc. - our world has become dependent on plastic. If we do not change this dependency and look for new ways to avoid the overuse of plastic on a systemic level, more and more tons of waste will be produced for which there is less and less space. Changing our habits is not just a consumer issue.

Consumers are barely scratching the surface when reducing plastic consumption. It's up to big businesses and governments to adjust their consumption and find new ways to use less plastic from the start to reduce waste around the world.

### **RELATED AGREEMENTS AND PAST UN ACTIONS**

All Parties to the Paris Agreement committed to strengthening the global response to climate change by increasing the ability of all to adapt and build resilience and reduce vulnerability. At COP26, countries adopted the Glasgow Climate Pact, which calls for a doubling of finance to support developing countries in adapting to the impacts of climate change and building resilience. Glasgow also established a work program to define a global goal on adaptation, which will identify collective needs and solutions to the climate crisis already affecting many countries. Since 2011, under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, a number of countries have developed National Adaptation Plans.

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) will convene a forum by the end of 2022 that is open to all stakeholders in conjunction with the first session of the INC, to share knowledge and best practices in different parts of the world. It will facilitate open discussions and ensure they are informed by science, reporting on progress throughout the next two years. Finally, upon completion of the INC's work, UNEP will convene a diplomatic conference to adopt its outcome and open it for signatures.

### **QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION MUST ANSWER (QARMAs)**

- 1) What is your country's status quo of plastic pollution prevention measures?
- 2) What steps have been taken to measure plastic pollution prevention?
- 3) How is your country dealing with international plastic prevention agreements?
- 4) Has the UN fulfilled plastic pollution prevention measures on a global scale? Please elaborate on your answer.
- 5) How do you manage plastic pollution from multi-national companies?
- 6) What are the loopholes of existing global plastic pollution prevention?
- 7) What are the possible actions taken by countries to unify the plastic pollution prevention measure on a bigger scale?

### **TIPS AND TRICKS TO BE A GREAT DELEGATE**

- 1) RESEARCH! This is the ultimate way to get through the entire solutions-making process.
- 2) Brainstorm: make some time to think the possible ways to solutions before and during the conference.
- 3) Be brave: nobody is you, so you are unique in your own way and that's the reason why you must be brave to engage in the committee.
- 4) Bring fresh and innovative solutions: ensure the solutions you propose are the new, fresh and innovative solutions, unlike the old ones that have been proposed. This committee is supposed to conclude the new alternatives.

### Further research links

- 1) <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/ocean-plastic-pollution-solutions>
- 2) [https://nicholasinstitute.duke.edu/sites/default/files/publications/20-Years-of-Government-Responses-to-the-Global-Plastic-Pollution-Problem\\_final\\_reduced.pdf](https://nicholasinstitute.duke.edu/sites/default/files/publications/20-Years-of-Government-Responses-to-the-Global-Plastic-Pollution-Problem_final_reduced.pdf)
- 3) [https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/climate-adaptation?gclid=Cj0KCQjwz7uRBhDRARIsAFqjulkvMeDpHaWnmATTpZnWrWhQ9AFEWtPQ0oOZeHY\\_ssS5iiBGquMCirAaAhZDEALw\\_wcB](https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/climate-adaptation?gclid=Cj0KCQjwz7uRBhDRARIsAFqjulkvMeDpHaWnmATTpZnWrWhQ9AFEWtPQ0oOZeHY_ssS5iiBGquMCirAaAhZDEALw_wcB)
- 4) <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/03/1113142>
- 5) <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/world-leaders-set-sights-plastic-pollution>
- 6) <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/historic-day-campaign-beat-plastic-pollution-nations-commit-develop>