Beat: News

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY BRINGS SOLUTIONS TO PLASTIC POLLUTION INTO FOCUS

TO END PLASTIC POLLUTION IN FRANCE

Paris, Washington DC, 05.06.2023, 23:44 Time

USPA NEWS - 2023 marks the 50th anniversary of World Environment Day, after it was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1972. Individuals, communities, civil society, businesses and governments around the world today marked World Environment Day with a focus on solutions to plastic pollution, with official celebrations held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, with the support of the Netherlands. The focus on solutions to plastic pollution this World Environment Day is particularly timely, following the recent conclusion of a second round of negotiations on a global agreement to end plastic pollution in France.

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WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY BRINGS SOLUTIONS TO PLASTIC POLLUTION INTO FOCUS OVER AGREEMENT
TO END PLASTIC POLLUTION IN FRANCE
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"Plastic is made from fossil fuels – the more plastic we produce, the more fossil fuel we burn, and the worse we make the climate crisis. But we have solutions," UN Secretary-General António Guterres said in his World Environment Day message. "We must work as one – governments, companies, and consumers alike – to break our addiction to plastics, champion zero waste, and build a truly circular economy."

Speaking at the official event at Espace Latrille Events Deux Plateaux in Abidjan, Mr. Jean-Luc Assi, Côte d'Ivoire's Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development, said: "Côte d'Ivoire issued a decree in 2013 banning the production, import and marketing, possession and use of plastic bags. It has supported businesses in switching to reusable and biodegradable packaging. The country's largest city, Abidjan, has also become a hub for start-ups looking to beat plastic pollution. They are being encouraged. So let's all be aware of the need to combat plastic pollution. Let's act now and all say stop to plastic pollution."

"World Environment Day helps to highlight the urgent challenges we currently face. Challenges like climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. Plastic pollution touches on all three of those challenges," noted Vivianne Heijnen, Netherlands' Minister for the Environment. "It's crucial that we continue raising awareness, collecting best practices, and ensuring commitment from all stakeholders. I hope that this edition of World Environment Day will prove to be a landmark event in our collective fight to beat plastic pollution."

Humanity produces over 430 million tonnes of plastic annually, two-thirds of which are short-lived products that soon become waste. While the social and economic costs of plastic pollution range between $US300 to US$600 billion per year.

According to a recent UNEP report, Turning off the Tap, plastic pollution could reduce by 80 per cent by 2040 if countries and companies make deep policy and market shifts using existing technologies.

“For the sake of the planet’s health, for the sake of our health, for the sake of our prosperity, we must end plastic pollution. This will take nothing less than a complete redesign of how we produce, use, recover and dispose of plastics and products that contain them,” said Inger Andersen, Executive Director of (UNEP). “How the world produces, consumes and disposes of plastic has created a disaster. But it is one we can end by turning off the tap on plastic pollution. On World Environment Day, I call on everybody to join the global movement. And help us beat plastic pollution, once and for all.”

At the second session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) on plastic pollution in Paris, France, the INC Chair was given the mandate to prepare a zero draft of an international, legally binding agreement on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.

In February 2022, at the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5.2), a historic resolution (5/14) was adopted to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment with the ambition to complete the negotiations by end of 2024. The instrument is to be based on a comprehensive approach that addresses the full life cycle of plastic. The third session of the INC will take place in Nairobi, Kenya, in November 2023.

ACTION ON PLASTIC POLLUTION

Across the world, in the lead up to, and on World Environment Day, the momentum for global action is clear. This World Environment Day Map showcases innovative, community-driven solutions to reduce plastic pollution. Hundreds of activities have been registered, from beach clean-ups in Mumbai to cloth-bag sewing workshops in Ghana and zero-plastic-waste live concerts in Atlanta.

The International Air Travel Agency and UNEP announced a Memorandum of Understanding, aligned with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to address sustainability challenges in the aviation industry. Reduction of problematic single use plastics products and improving the circularity in the use of plastics by the aviation industry is the initial focus of the partnership.

At a World Environment Day event at the International Association of Public Transport (UITP) Global Public Transport Summit, in Barcelona, Spain, UNEP and the UITP unveiled a Memorandum of Understanding to formalise their partnership, with a strong focus on environmental and sustainability awareness raising across public transport networks.

With the support of UNEP, Jyrgalan, a village in the Kyrgyz Republic, recently inaugurated its first waste collection facility; the facility aims to address the village’s growing waste challenges – brought on by increased tourism - through building capacity for small businesses and strengthening the role of women in decision-making.

In Panama, under the leadership of UNEP representatives of the Panamanian government, UN offices at the regional and national levels and civil society, including youth organizations, committed to reduce plastic waste both in their offices and their communities.

The Kenya Plastics Pact released new industry guidelines on recyclability for plastic packaging. The guidelines aim to provide clear recommendations to decision-makers on how to design plastic packaging to be compatible with and future mechanical recycling infrastructure.

In New York, an art project made entirely of plastic waste will be launched at the World Trade Center. In India, screen stars and famous musicians have come together to create a music video and share messages to encourage more people to take action against plastic pollution. In Kazakhstan, local music group Great Steppe released a music video to mark the Day and highlight the environmental damage the Aral Sea is suffering, while a UN-supported sustainable fashion and art event in Almaty showcased pieces made from recycled materials.

Airports and transport networks around the world, from China and Indonesia to Chile and the United States, as well as billboards in Times Square and Piccadilly Circus broadcast World Environment Day messages, bringing awareness to millions of passengers and citizens of the importance of action to curb the menace of plastic pollution.

Hundreds of thousands of people participated in World Environment Day online, with the day's hashtags #WorldEnvironmentDay and #BeatPlasticPollution trending at number one and two respectively on Twitter. More than 50,000 people downloaded UNEP's Beat Plastic Pollution Practical Guide.

These events, actions and exhibits, taking place in community centres, schools, businesses and homes, illustrate how individuals and communities are important drivers of environmental action. They can spur governments, cities, financial institutions and industries to use their capacity to invest in and implement large-scale solutions to overcome and reverse the plastic pollution crisis." SOURCE: ?United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Article online:
https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-22890/world-environment-day-brings-solutions-to-plastic-pollution-into-focus.html

Editorial office and responsibility:
V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDStV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): Jedi Foster, Rahma Sophia RACHDI

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:
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contact (at) unitedpressagency.com
Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619