

SEA_{of} Solutions

A Spotlight on Solutions
to end plastic pollution in
South-East Asia

Voices from South-East Asia to End Plastic Pollution

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SEA of Solutions 2022 – Voices from South-East Asia to end plastic pollution

About SEA of Solutions

SEA of Solutions is the annual high-level partnership forum for voices of stakeholders in South-East Asia working towards ending plastic pollution. It is convened by [SEA circular](#), an initiative by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) supported by the Government of Sweden. SEA of Solutions has served as a platform for inspiration, sharing of information and best practices, meaningful dialogue to facilitate collaboration, as well as partnership opportunities in promoting circularity throughout the plastic value chain.

At SEA of Solutions 2022, impactful solutions that promote the transition from a linear to a circular plastics economy were spotlighted – from designing, producing, and consuming products to post-consumer waste management. At the event, [12 inspiring solutions](#) from South-East Asia had the opportunity to showcase how they contribute to a circular plastics economy in collaborative, inclusive and innovative ways.

2022 marks a historic year for global action to beat plastic pollution. At the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly in March 2022, 175 UN member States agreed to negotiate an international legally binding instrument by 2024 on ending plastic pollution.

With over a thousand registrations, mainly from Asia and the Pacific, SEA of Solutions brought together regional stakeholders on 23-24 November 2022, just days ahead of the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution. Multiple sectors were represented with 34 % of participants coming from the private sector, 25 % from civil society, 14 % from international organisations and 12 % from government agencies. Nearly 60 % of those registered identified as female. Speakers and participants shared scalable actions around the themes of inclusivity, innovation, and collaboration with a special focus on responsible business conduct, respect for human rights and gender equality.

Five key action points from the SEA of Solutions 2022

- 1. We need to work together to beat plastic pollution at its source.** Working with all stakeholders is indispensable to building a global deal that enables a circular plastic economy. Only through collective action can we supercharge ambition, scale existing solutions and design new ones to beat plastic pollution. Countries in the Asia and the Pacific region have developed regional frameworks that emphasize the need for collaborative action and coordination. Many countries have also developed national action plans and road maps to address plastic pollution and marine litter challenges. Actions are required from governments, the finance sector, and other stakeholder groups to successfully scale innovations for a circular plastics economy. Solutions represented during the event provided examples of positive results in building circularity within the plastics value chain through collaboration among businesses, academia, local governments and communities, and other stakeholders.
- 2. We can learn from Asia and the Pacific in addressing the plastic pollution crisis and finding solutions.** The region produces and consumes a significant share of global plastics. Significant quantities of plastic waste from other parts of the globe are also imported and managed in the region. Plastic leakage into the marine environment is a major issue that impacts ecosystems and communities. At the same time, solutions for a circular plastics economy exist and are scalable. In South-East Asia, new policy developments, market-based solutions on extended producer responsibility and producer responsibility organizations are taking shape. There is a lot to learn, share

and replicate. SEA of Solutions showcased concrete actions that are building a circular plastics value chain through collaboration across sectors, inclusive approaches and technological innovations.

- 3. We can create enabling environments for small and medium-sized enterprises.** Circularity across the plastics value chain creates space for new business models at all stages of the value chain. These range from eliminating hazardous and unnecessary plastics to designing plastic products to be circular, from circulating plastic products and materials to managing non-recyclable plastics sustainably. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) often work close to local communities. They are agile in designing and adopting circular business models to create business opportunities where they didn't exist. Spotlighted solutions highlighted that, for circular business models to scale, an enabling policy environment is needed. Access to sufficient finance is also important, as start-up costs are often daunting for SMEs, and they require dedicated time before there is a return on investment.
- 4. We can make solutions to beat plastic pollution inclusive.** The plastic pollution crisis not only damages the environment, it also impacts human rights. In South-East Asia, marginalised and coastal communities are particularly vulnerable to the effects of plastic pollution. Their inclusion and empowerment through plastics circularity must be a priority. It is important to ensure that human rights and gender equality are fully considered at all stages of designing a circular plastics economy. A people-centric approach, which incentivises communities impacted by plastic pollution, will strengthen participation and collaboration that support ending plastic pollution. It is important to ensure that jobs created within circular plastics solutions, especially those in the informal sector, are safe and are performed under healthy working conditions. Solutions supporting behavioural change in consumption of plastics should be inclusive and accessible.
- 5. We can develop viable circular plastic solutions by leveraging innovation.** Circular innovation is central to creating economic value while reducing the use of virgin plastics. Through innovation, it is possible to rethink and redesign the full life cycle of plastics. A range of innovative solutions exist that work to close the loop of plastics value chain with locally applicable and scalable collection, recycling, and remanufacturing methods. In addition to downstream solutions, it is important to leverage innovation upstream in the plastic value chain to develop and scale solutions that focus on circular design, plastic avoidance and plastic substitution. Ensuring financing for new technologies and innovations that reduce plastic consumption and plastic dependence is essential.

Now is the time for decisive action to end plastic pollution!