

Research Report

Global Mayors Forum



***The Question of Reducing Single-Use Plastic
Consumption and Waste***

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Introduction

The production and consumption of plastic, particularly single-use plastic (SUP), has reached unsustainable levels globally. According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), approximately 400 million tons of plastic waste are produced annually, with 40% of it being single-use plastic. Despite its utility, the environmental consequences of plastic waste are dire, especially in cities where waste management systems are often overwhelmed. This report will focus on municipal-level actions to reduce single-use plastic consumption and waste.

Single-use plastics have become one of the most pressing environmental challenges worldwide. Their widespread use in consumer goods, packaging, and other industries leads to significant waste, most of which is not biodegradable and ends up polluting land, oceans, and other ecosystems. This report explores the need for urgent action to reduce single-use plastic consumption and waste at the municipal level. It provides an overview of the environmental and health impacts of plastic pollution, explores current global efforts to tackle this issue, and offers actionable recommendations for local governments to reduce plastic consumption and promote sustainable alternatives.

The Committee

You will be a delegate in the Global Mayors forum, a unique committee within the United Nations that does not have any special rules of procedure. The General Assembly's rules of procedure apply to the Global Mayors Forum. The Global Mayors Forum discusses social, economic, and sustainable issues affecting metropolitan cities. Therefore, each delegate will represent a metropolitan city as their mayor. The delegate acts as the mayor for the capital city of their allocated nation. As a delegate of the Global Mayors forum you will partake in the debate about resolutions. Resolutions have to be handed in beforehand by each delegation. It is important to take into account that financial abilities in partaking in resolving the issue are not part of debates in MUNA, thus it is expected that a delegate does not speak against a resolution due to financial reasons.

Keywords

Single-Use Plastics (SUP) – Plastics designed for one-time use, such as plastic bags, straws, cutlery, and packaging, which are discarded after use.

Plastic Waste – Discarded plastic materials that are no longer needed, often accumulating in landfills or polluting the environment.

Plastic Pollution – The accumulation of plastic waste in the environment, particularly in oceans, rivers, and on land, where it harms wildlife and ecosystems.

Environmental Impact – The effect of human activities, including plastic consumption and waste, on the natural environment, including ecosystems, water, air, and biodiversity.

Marine Pollution – Pollution that occurs in oceans, primarily caused by human-made substances like plastics, which are harmful to marine life and ecosystems.

Microplastics – Tiny plastic particles less than 5mm in size, often resulting from the breakdown of larger plastic waste, that contaminate water, soil, and food sources.

Waste Management – The collection, transportation, disposal, or recycling of waste materials, including plastics, to reduce their environmental impact.

Sustainable Alternatives – Materials or products that can replace single-use plastics, such as biodegradable packaging, plant-based materials, or reusable containers.

Circular Economy – An economic system aimed at eliminating waste and the continual use of resources by promoting the reuse, recycling, and repurposing of materials.

Recycling – The process of converting waste materials into new products to prevent the waste of useful materials, reduce consumption of fresh raw materials, and decrease energy usage.

Plastic Bans – Legal restrictions on the use of certain single-use plastics, often aiming to reduce pollution and encourage alternatives.

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) – A policy approach where manufacturers are held accountable for the entire lifecycle of their products, including the disposal or recycling of their packaging.

Zero-Waste Initiatives – Programs and practices focused on minimizing waste by reusing, recycling, or composting materials to create a waste-free environment.

Plastic Packaging – Packaging made from plastic, often used for food, beverages, and other products. It is a major contributor to plastic waste.

Eco-friendly Packaging – Packaging made from sustainable materials, such as biodegradable or recyclable materials, designed to have less environmental impact.

Public Awareness Campaigns – Efforts aimed at educating the public about the dangers of plastic pollution and promoting more sustainable behaviors.

Plastic-Free Zones – Areas where the use of plastic items is prohibited, often implemented in cities, parks, or events to reduce plastic waste.

Sustainability – The ability to meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, particularly in terms of environmental conservation.

Plastic Reduction Strategies – Plans and policies aimed at reducing plastic consumption, such as plastic bans, encouraging recycling, and promoting alternatives.

Green Packaging – Environmentally friendly packaging made from materials that are biodegradable, compostable, or recyclable, and designed to minimize environmental harm.

Biodegradable Plastics – Plastics that can be broken down by microorganisms into natural substances, reducing their long-term environmental impact compared to traditional plastics.

Pollution Mitigation – Efforts to reduce or prevent pollution, including the reduction of plastic waste through recycling, bans, and promoting alternatives.

Plastic Alternatives – Materials that can replace traditional plastic in packaging and products, such as glass, metal, paper, or plant-based materials.

Plastic-Free Cities – Urban areas that have adopted policies and practices to reduce or eliminate single-use plastic items, aiming for more sustainable living.

Waste Reduction – The practice of reducing the amount of waste generated, including through reducing plastic consumption, reusing products, and improving recycling rates.

Plastic Consumption – The act of using plastic products, especially single-use plastics, which contributes to increased plastic waste and pollution.

Plastic Ban Policies – Laws or regulations designed to restrict or eliminate the use of certain single-use plastics in order to reduce environmental damage.

Corporate Responsibility – The responsibility of businesses to minimize their environmental impact, including reducing plastic packaging and waste, and promoting sustainability.

Government Regulations – Laws or guidelines enacted by governments to control or reduce plastic consumption and manage waste, such as bans, taxes, and producer responsibility programs.

Zero-Waste Communities – Communities that aim to send no waste to landfills or incinerators by adopting practices like reusing, recycling, and composting, and reducing reliance on single-use plastics.

Arguments

Environmental Consequences:

Single-use plastics take hundreds of years to degrade, during which time they pollute the land and water ecosystems. Marine life is particularly vulnerable, with millions of marine animals dying each year from ingesting plastic debris.

- **Plastic in the Ocean:** Around 8 million tons of plastic enter the oceans annually. Plastic waste is responsible for choking coral reefs, harming marine species, and disrupting marine ecosystems.
- **Wildlife Impact:** Terrestrial and aquatic wildlife ingest or become entangled in plastics, leading to injury and death.
- **Soil and Water Contamination:** Microplastics, particles less than 5mm in size, have contaminated soil, freshwater, and marine environments, entering the food chain.

Human Health Risks:

The accumulation of microplastics in water sources poses significant risks to human health. Chemicals leached from plastics, such as bisphenol A (BPA), phthalates, and other additives, are known to disrupt endocrine systems and have been linked to various health issues, including cancer and developmental disorders.



Resolution

When composing a resolution, a delegate should carefully consider their country's perspective and opinion on the matter. This research report is a good starting point for your research. Try to think of ways that offer a solution for all countries involved to protect cultural diversity of national, ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities.

Remember to focus on all nations in the world keeping in mind the different crises in the world and the effects people all over the world experience from them. Make sure the measurements are realistic and achievable.

Moreover, you should keep in mind that different countries have different policies and keep the global differences in mind. These differences might be economic; however, they are also largely cultural. Make sure to research your country in detail, and keep in mind that you are speaking as if representing that nation. Therefore, make sure to have done some research about your country's policies before joining the conference.

References

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