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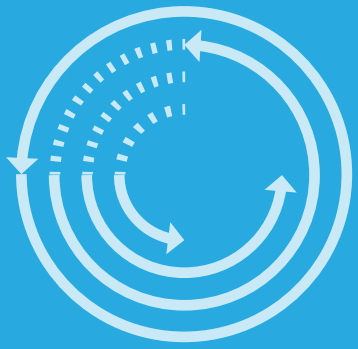
UNEP PLASTICS INITIATIVE

UNEP'S PROGRAMME

TO ACTIVATE AND SCALE UP

GLOBAL, REGIONAL, AND NATIONAL ACTIONS

TO TACKLE PLASTIC POLLUTION



The Initiative consolidates all UNEP's plastic-related projects, activities, actions, and results into a unified programme.

ISSUE OF PLASTIC POLLUTION

Lightweight, durable, and inexpensive, plastic has many valuable uses in our daily life. However, our current levels of plastic production, usage, and disposal pose serious threats to our health, environment, and economy. Due to our resource-inefficient, linear economy of plastic, plastic pollution has become one of the most pressing environmental issues we face today.

To turn the tide on plastic pollution, the UNEP Plastics Initiative consolidates all UNEP's plastic-related projects, activities, actions, and results into a unified programme that leads and implements a system-wide transformation towards a safe circular economy of plastics.

VISION AND AIM

UNEP Plastics Initiative has a long-term vision to end global plastic pollution.

To bring this vision to fruition, the Initiative aims to tackle plastic pollution by creating an enabling and empowering environment that accelerates market transformation towards a circular economy of plastics. It has a specific focus on activating upstream innovation and solutions that focus on reduction and reuse.

We will not recycle our way out of the plastic pollution crisis: we need a systemic transformation to achieve the transition to a circular economy.

Inger Andersen, UNEP Executive Director

STRATEGIC GOALS

To fulfill its vision and aim, drawing from the Plastics Science document of the first session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution (UNEP/PP/INC.1/7), the Initiative has the following **four** strategic goals:

GOAL 1: **REDUCE THE SIZE OF THE PROBLEM:** Eliminating and substituting unnecessary or problematic plastics and hazardous additives, accelerating the market for reusable products, and increasing the use of recycled plastics.

GOAL 2: **DESIGN FOR CIRCULARITY:** Ensuring products are designed to be circular (toxic-free, less resource-intensive, reusable, recyclable, and compostable), for both plastics and alternatives.

GOAL 3: **ENSURE CIRCULARITY IN PRACTICE:** Closing the loop of plastic in the economy by ensuring plastic products are circulated in practice (reused, recycled, and composted).

GOAL 4: **DEAL WITH THE LEGACY:** Managing plastic waste that cannot be reused or recycled in an environmentally sound manner.

TARGETS

The Initiative works with a wide range of partners and stakeholders to achieve the following targets **by 2030:**

1 **45 COUNTRIES** will have improved their plastics policies and regulations to enable robust transition towards a just and safe circular economy of plastics.

2 **500 PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS** in key industry sectors will have adopted effective circular solutions and innovations, committed to circular economy to reduce plastic pollution.

3 **50 FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS** will have included circularity or plastic pollution prevention and reduction policies in their sustainability strategy and/or targets.

APPROACH

The Initiative adopts a programmatic approach and delivers **global, regional, and in-country projects in high-impact sectors and value chains**. In developing and implementing these projects, the Initiative coordinates with all relevant UNEP divisions and teams, peer agencies, and partners and engages with global partners, as well as with regional, national, and sub-national initiatives, governments, businesses, NGOs, and academia.

Global Projects

that focus on technical assistance, science assessment, harmonised methodology, guidance on national action plans, monitoring and reporting, communications and outreach, partnership, finance and investment, and capacity building

Regional Projects

that focus on regional enabling environment for replication and upscaling, engagement, peer-to-peer learning, and capacity building

National & Sub-national Projects

that focus on policy implementation and enforcement, industrial innovation, technology application, infrastructure development, and stakeholder engagement

INTERVENTION AREAS

The Initiative is active in the following intervention areas:

INDUSTRY - Guiding and supporting industry action: Support companies and businesses to develop and upscale effective, innovative, and sustainable new business models and alternative product design towards a circular plastic economy.

REGULATION & POLICY DEVELOPMENT - Enabling national and local regulatory frameworks: Support and engage national and local governments to develop and implement integrated policies and enabling regulations across the plastic life cycle that promote circularity.

ENABLING & PLANNING - Enabling coordinated and concerted actions: Support the development and implementation of coordinated and concerted action among all stakeholders, by developing harmonised methodologies and conducting scientific assessments to better understand the plastics issue.

FINANCE - Supporting finance action: Support the development and implementation of public and private finance to create an enabling finance environment for the uptake of circular products, policies, innovation, technologies, solutions, and infrastructure.

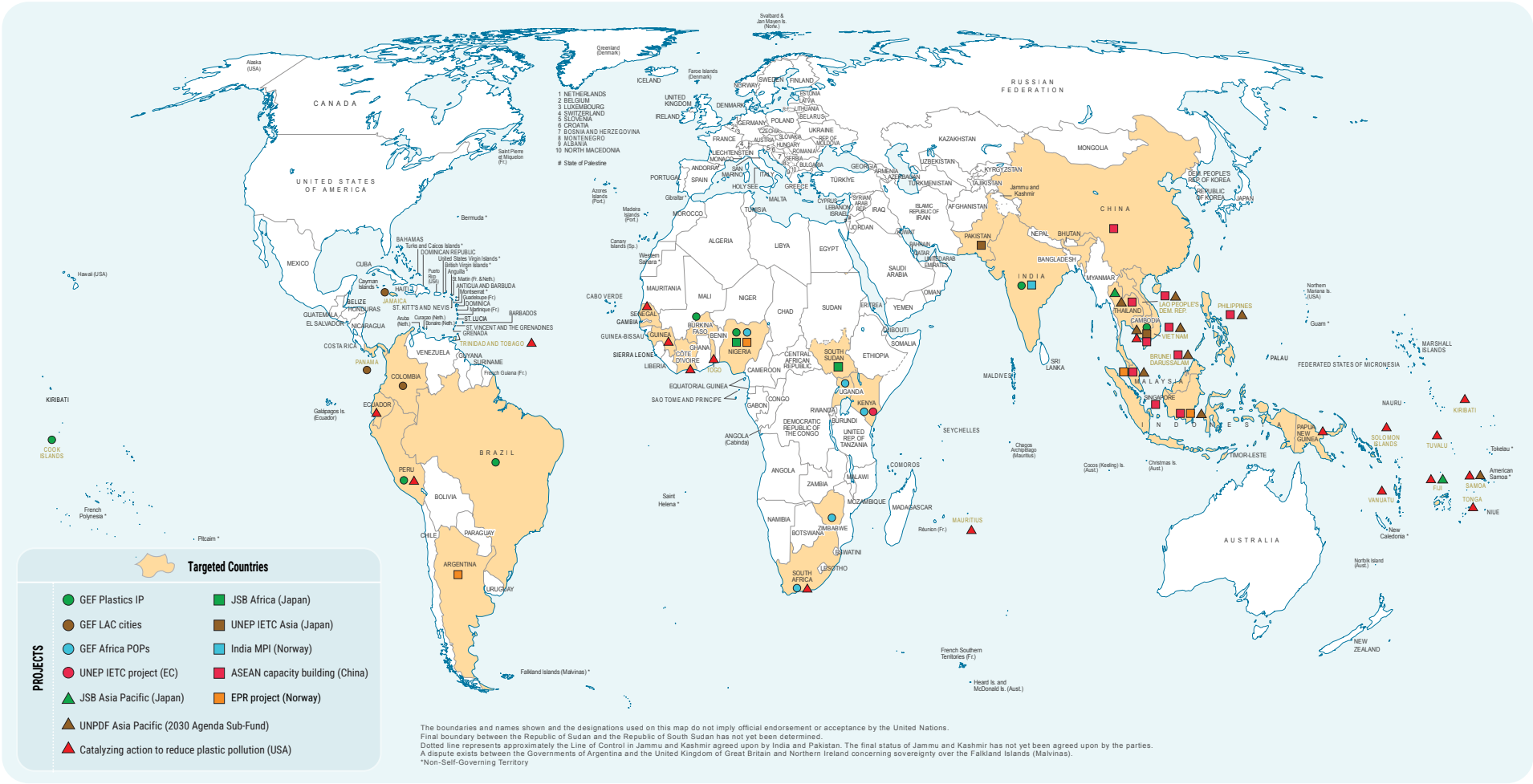
COMMUNICATION & CAMPAIGNS - Activating behaviour change and social action: Develop and disseminate communication and awareness-raising campaigns, and support capacity development and engagement strategies to shift industry and government practices, change social norms and end-consumer behaviour towards plastics circularity.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT & CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT - Supporting capacity development and informed decisions: Support capacities of governments and businesses, as well as UN Country Teams, and increase their capacity to apply relevant knowledge products and harmonised approaches towards plastics circularity.

ONGOING PROJECTS (as of March 2025)

The Initiative mobilizes funding from a wide array of sources. Currently there are more than **12 active projects** being implemented by UNEP in **41 countries**, which encom pass different geographic locations, sectors, intervention areas and stakeholders. The map below shows the global footprint of ongoing projects under the Initiative.

Among several major funding sources, the '[Circular Solutions to Plastic Pollution Integrated Programme]' has been granted by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to implement 15 national projects and one global project on circularity in the food and beverage sector in collaboration with partners.



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If you have any questions or willingness to collaborate with the UNEP Plastics Initiative, please reach out to us at unep-plastics-initiative@un.org

Sign up for the **UNEP Plastics Initiative Newsletter** here to receive updates on our work, events, and ways you can get involved.