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Building back better: Combatting marine plastic pollution collectively



Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Marine environmental protection is one of the areas that regressed during the pandemic and calls for immediate action. The United Nations observed the 14th World Oceans Day on June 8th, emphasising the need for all stakeholders to act collectively to protect the ocean.

Growing threat of marine plastic debris

Global pandemic responses have intensified marine environmental problems, particularly marine plastic debris. The pandemic has seen the surge in the use of medical protective equipment and plastic packaging, with most plastic waste ending up in the ocean. Studies estimate that marine plastic debris will [quadruple](#) by 2050 without effective intervention.

The impacts of marine plastic pollution are wide-ranging and far-reaching. Ma-

rine plastic debris severely destroys the marine ecosystem and subsequently threatens the food safety and security of people relying on the ocean for food. Each year, economic loss caused by marine plastic pollution can reach up to [US\\$330 billion](#). Moreover, marine plastics contribute to climate change, as the breaking-down process of plastics releases greenhouse gases. Combatting marine plastic debris is therefore part of the broader climate action.

Action by different stakeholders

Given the complex nature of marine plastic pollution, solution to the challenge should be multi-pronged. Progress has been made in establishing the policy and legal frameworks for plastic waste management. The UN Environment Assembly adopted the [resolution](#) in March 2022, which announced the establishment of an intergovernmental negotiating committee

to deliver a legally binding instrument by 2024 to end plastic pollution.

In Southeast Asia, ASEAN adopted the Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Debris in ASEAN Region in 2019 and launched the Regional Action Plan (2021-2025) in 2021. Indonesia and Thailand, major contributors of marine plastic debris, implemented national policies to reduce consumption of single-use plastic products.

In addition to national governments and inter-governmental organisations, the scientific community and the private sector have essential roles to play by providing technological expertise and financing schemes. Technology-based solutions have been developed to improve tracking, monitoring and processing plastic waste. Better waste management infrastructure is essential as land-based waste is a primary source of marine plastic debris, but [financing](#) is a constant

constraint on improving the infrastructure, with current financing only meeting a small portion of the actual needs. Private capital is a major source of financing to fill in the gap.

Building back better through transformation

Apart from better waste management, the shift towards circular economy has been extensively discussed as part of the solution to the marine plastic crisis. The circular economy model means minimising the disposal of waste and the need for raw materials through reducing, reusing, recycling, refurbishing, and remanufacturing materials in production, distribution, and consumption.

The shift already started in Southeast Asia, as [ASEAN](#) adopted the Framework for Circular Economy for the ASEAN Economic Community on 18 October 2021. Singapore and Indonesia have launched their masterplan or

roadmap towards circular economy, with minimising waste disposal and improving waste management as core components of their national actions.

However, this shift will be a long process and not without resistance. Restriction over the use of single-use plastic products will inevitably increase business costs and require behavioral changes of consumers. To seek public understanding and cooperation, awareness-raising and incentives are necessary at the initial phase. Civil society groups are well placed to facilitate changes given their connection with communities.

As countries are looking to build back better after COVID-19, it is important that marine environmental protection features strongly in the recovery plans, as the issue has critical bearing on people's well-being, national development and the global climate action. A multi-stakeholder approach diversifies the sources of contributions and addresses different dimensions of the challenge.

Suggested Readings

- UN ESCAP, 2022, Managing marine plastic debris in Asia and the Pacific, 13 January, https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/Policy%20Brief_Plastic-English_final.pdf
- Helen V. Ford, Nia H. Jones, Andrew J. Davies, Brendan J. Godley, et al., 2022, The fundamental links between climate change and marine plastic pollution, Vol.806, Part 1, <https://doi.org/remotexs.ntu.edu.sg/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2021.150392>
- Emma Schmaltz, Emily C. Melvin, Zoie Diana, Ella F. Gunady, et al., 2020, Plastic pollution solutions: Emerging technologies to prevent and collect marine plastic pollution, *Environment International*, Vol.144, <https://doi.org/remotexs.ntu.edu.sg/10.1016/j.envint.2020.106067>
- Mehnaz Shams, Iftaykhairul Alam, and Md Shahriar Mahbuba, 2021, Plastic pollution during COVID-19: Plastic waste directives and its long-term impact on the environment, *Environmental Advances*, Vol.5, <https://doi.org/remotexs.ntu.edu.sg/10.1016/j.envadv.2021.100119>

CLIMATE CHANGE

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Key climate change indicators hit record highs in 2021: UN report

Greenhouse gas concentrations, sea level rise, ocean heat and ocean acidification all set new records last year. The heat trapped by human-induced greenhouse gases will warm the planet for many generations to come.

Al Jazeera

18 May 2022

The Ukraine war has upended the energy transition — and it's not good news for the planet

Kremlin's assault on Ukraine will likely have major implications for global heating targets, particularly as many countries turn to coal or imports of liquefied natural gas as alternative sources to Russian energy.

Sam Meredith

CNBC

20 May 2022

Climate change threatens access to water and sanitation, warn UNECE & WHO/Europe, urging reinforced measures under Protocol to boost resilience

Insufficient drinking water supply, contamination by sewage overflow, disease outbreaks from improper wastewater treatment, existing risks from climate change to water, sanitation and hygiene in the pan-European region are set to increase significantly.

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

20 May 2022

PCG joins maritime drills in Indonesia, calls for protection of marine env't

The Regional Marine Pollution Exercise 2022 seeks to enhance environmental cooperation among the coast guards of Indonesia, the Philippines, and Japan through planning, command and control, and integrated operations.

Martin Sadongdong

Manila Bulletin

24 May 2022

Fiji says climate change, not conflict, is Asia's biggest security threat

Fiji argues that "[i]n our blue Pacific continent, machine guns, fighter jets, grey ships and green battalions are not our primary security concern. The single greatest threat to our very existence is climate change. It threatens our very hopes and dreams of prosperity."

Reuters

Channel News Asia

12 June 2022

WTO goes green as climate change impacts trade

The WTO is putting climate change at the heart of its negotiations. Climate change is not strictly within the WTO's purview but the organisation wants to make sustainable development and environmental protection among its core objectives.

AFP

The Straits Times

14 June 2022

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

A just energy transition in Southeast Asia: The impacts of coal phase-out on jobs

This report discusses the need to ensure a just transition while phasing out coal examining the cases of Indonesia, the Philippines and Viet Nam. It sets out a framework of cooperation for a just energy transition in partnership with national, regional and local actors.

Geneva: International Labour Organization

2022

On thin ice: A guide for philanthropists and changemakers to address climate change

Less than 2 per cent of philanthropic giving globally is directed to climate cause. The report looks to change this by showing donors, philanthropists and investors how to fill the climate funding gap, and the benefits and impacts of "green philanthropy".

Steve Tilling (ed.)

UBS Philanthropy Services

2022

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

IWA World Water Congress & Exhibition

This event will engage stakeholders and key contacts within the conventional water sector and beyond. It will bring together core water sector groups, such as those focused on urban water and urban water services, and participants from industry and agriculture, among others.

Copenhagen, Denmark

11-15 September 2022

World Maritime Day

"New Technologies for Greener Shipping" theme reflects the need to support a green transition of the maritime sector. It provides an opportunity to focus on a sustainable maritime sector and the need to build back better and greener in a post pandemic world.

Bonn, Germany

29 September 2022

ENERGY SECURITY

NEWS AND COMMENTARIES

Vietnam floats prospect of resuming nuclear power development

Vietnam's industry minister has told the national assembly developing nuclear power is an "inevitable trend" around the world, signalling that authorities may be considering resuming a plan to construct nuclear power plants after the programme was suspended six years ago.

Reuters

Channel News Asia

31 May 2022

Vietnam leads transition to clean energy in Southeast Asia

Vietnam has emerged as a bright spot in Southeast Asia as it is taking the lead in transition to clean energy from fossil fuels in the region. Over the four years to 2021, the share of solar-generated electricity in Vietnam increased from practically nothing to nearly 11 percent.

Vinh Tho

Thuoi Tre News

5 June 2022

Gov't expert urges adoption of small nuclear reactors

Philippine Nuclear Research Institute Director Carlo Arcilla stated that SMRs are ideal for isolated islands in the country not connected to the grid.

Jane Bautista

Inquirer

6 June 2022

Southeast Asia's power generation has tripled in 20 years. But is it running out of energy options?

A new report says ASEAN members' energy security is at risk if they do not develop more renewable power. These nations also need to take urgent action to curb their greenhouse emissions, after relying on coal to power their economic growth..

Douglas Broom

World Economic Forum

8 June 2022

Enrique Razon's Prime Infra to build world's largest solar farm in Philippines

Billionaire's solar plan could decrease a total of 1.4 million tons of coal or 930,000 liters of oil in annual consumption in order to generate electricity.

Marvin Joseph Ang

Yahoo News

9 June 2022

UN chief says the dash for new fossil fuels is 'delusional'

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said "new funding for fossil fuel exploration and production infrastructure is delusional" and would worsen the global problems of pollution and climate change.

Reuters

Channel News Asia

14 June 2022

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Ready for nuclear energy?: A policy review of the Philippines' nuclear energy plan and participation in the ASEAN Network of Regulatory Bodies on Atomic Energy

This article argues that the ASEAN member states' growing regional cooperation in nuclear safety and security can have a strong positive impact on the Philippines' nuclear energy preparations.

Julius Cesar Trajano

International Journal of Nuclear Security, Vol. 7, No. 2

2022

Meeting climate change targets: The role of nuclear energy

New analysis by the NEA identifies the potential contribution of nuclear energy to clean energy capacity and emissions reductions between 2020 and 2050.

Nuclear Energy Agency, OECD

2022

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

ACE Workshop on Energy Storage Development

The workshop provided possible actions to strengthen the role of energy storage in achieving ASEAN's goals on renewable energy.

Recorded Workshop

11 May 2022

Revolutionising change for the grid of the future

In this webinar, experts explore the technologies and strategies that will underpin the continued evolution of the power grid and how it can act as a catalyst for decarbonisation and renewable energy adoption.

Webinar

29 June 2022

FOOD SECURITY

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Food crisis: Malaysia bans chicken exports

Malaysia's Prime Minister said the country will stop exporting as many as 3.6 million chickens every month, as a means to stabilise domestic supplies and prices. This comes as an offshoot of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has caused a rise in wheat as a livestock feed.

Annabelle Liang
The ASEAN Post
 24 May 2022

India imposes restrictions on sugar exports from June 1

India's export ban on sugar adds to the wave of protectionism that is occurring in the international food sector. Sellers need to seek special permissions for any further export of sugar from 1st June til 31st October.

Diskha Madhok
CNN Business
 25 May 2022

Ukraine war and food security: How should ASEAN respond?

Given compounding disruptions in supply chains, the wolf of protectionism is potentially at ASEAN's door. Collective efforts must be strengthened to prevent its impact on food security from worsening. There is compelling need to explore how to mobilise its regional frameworks to nip the budding food price crisis.

Jose M.L. Montesclaros and Mely Caballero-Anthony
RSIS Commentary
 25 May 2022

Singapore has been working to secure food supply: PM Lee

Singapore has, for several years, been working to secure its supply of food and to prepare for challenges, including today's food crunch, according to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

Walter Sim
The Straits Times
 28 May 2022

Animal feed & meat: Asia's looming food crisis

Any reduction in feed availability will affect Asia's meat production. Supply chain delays arising from the Russia-Ukraine area have caused temporary shortages which drive up commodity prices.

Genevieve Donnellon-May and Paul Teng
RSIS Commentary
 6 June 2022

OPEC Fund devotes \$1bn to global food security in wake of Ukraine war

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries has established the OPEC Fund Food Security Action Plan, to assist in covering import costs of basic commodities such as seeds, grains and fertilizers, amid the war.

Arab News
 6 June 2022

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Global report on global food crises

This report highlights the severity and numbers of people in crisis in 55 countries/territories, driven by persistent conflict, pre-existing and COVID-19-related economic shocks, and weather extremes.

Global Network Against Food Crises and Food Safety Information Network
 2021

A Global Food Import Financing Facility (FIFF): Responding to soaring food import costs and addressing the needs of the most exposed

This document provides greater detail to the funding facility which the UN FAO has proposed in the recent UN Security Council meeting in May 2022, to support economically vulnerable countries with large food import needs.

Technical Background Document, Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO)
 2022

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Conflict and Food Security – UN Security Council, 9036th Meeting

In the recent UN Security Council meeting, the World Trade Organisation's Secretary-General, António Guterres, argued that "when this Council debates conflict, you debate hunger... when you fail to reach consensus, hungry people pay a high price."

Recorded Meeting
 19 May 2022

The 2nd Global Food Security & Sustainability Summit 2022

The summit gathers stakeholders from governmental organisations, private sector businesses and NGOs, to discuss current disruptions in the world food supply chain, while also highlighting sustainability issues.

Singapore
 30 June - 1 July 2022

HEALTH SECURITY

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Project SG100K: DNA of 100,000 Singaporeans to be mapped to identify new ways to prevent diseases

Singapore is embarking on a mission to map the DNA and the complete set of genes of 100,000 Singaporeans - to unravel clues that will further the population's health and well-being.

Shabana Begum
The Straits Times
26 May 2022

North Korea: The mystery of its Covid outbreak

It has been three weeks since North Korea announced its first ever Covid case. The government claims to have the outbreak under control, but the details remain a mystery.

Jean Mackenzie, Hosu Lee, and Reality Check Team
BBC
2 June 2022

New centre in Singapore will study impact of gut bacteria on diseases like dementia

A new centre was launched to study how bacteria residing in our gut affect health and ageing, and how they could be harnessed to delay the onset of age-related neurodegenerative diseases such as dementia.

Cheryl Tan
The Straits Times
3 June 2022

Trials of new Covid vaccine raise hopes of once-a-year booster

An updated version of Moderna's Covid vaccine produces an eight-fold increase in antibody levels against the Omicron variant, according to early trial results, raising hopes for a once-a-year booster to protect against the disease.

Ian Sample
The Guardian
8 June 2022

More than 1,000 monkeypox cases reported to WHO

There have been more than 1,000 monkeypox cases reported to the World Health Organization in the current outbreak outside the countries in Africa where it more commonly spreads.

Reuters
Channel News Asia
8 June 2022

Philips' Future Health Index 2022 report shows healthcare leaders are rebooting priorities as they emerge from the pandemic

As we emerge from the pandemic, healthcare leaders worldwide are embarking on a reboot. Many are refocusing on both new and existing priorities, from addressing staff shortages and extending care delivery, to leveraging big data and predictive analytics.

Asiaone
8 June 2022

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Global report on infection prevention and control

The WHO global report on infection prevention and control (IPC) provides a global situation analysis of how IPC programmes are being implemented in countries around the world, according to evidence from the scientific literature and various reports, and new data from WHO studies.

WHO
2022

COVID-19 and mandatory vaccination: Ethical considerations

This document identifies salient ethical considerations regarding mandatory vaccinations against COVID-19. It updates a policy brief initially published in April 2021 in response to changes in the COVID-19 vaccine landscape, including authorisation of vaccines for children and vaccination mandates for COVID-19.

WHO
2022

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Early Warning Tools for Neglected Tropical Diseases

The Sustainable Development Goals aim to end Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) and water-borne diseases by 2030. This webinar presented Early Warning and Response System (EWARS) and discussed Germany's approach to end NTDs and the obstacles on the way towards eliminating NTDs by 2030.

Recorded Webinar
17 May 2022

Monkeypox Outbreak: What We Need to Know

This webinar provided an update on the monkeypox outbreak including protection, diagnosis, treatment.

Recorded Webinar
30 May 2022

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Listen to the communities – Disaster displacement is on the increase, and the affected people must be heard

As the severity and number of climate-related extreme events increases, displacement is on the rise. Indigenous people living closest to the land are likely to be especially attuned to changes in the environment, and should be listened to.

United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

31 May 2022

Three lessons from three years of the Global Risk Financing Facility

World Bank's Global Risk Financing Facility has assisted vulnerable countries in improving financial preparedness by securing access to post-disaster financing, growing to 43 projects valued at over US\$200 million.

Simon Hagemann and Ronette Jordan

Global Risk Financing Facility

3 June 2022

Most aid funds go to just a few disasters. What about the rest?

As disasters continue to rise, it is less likely that global attention can be split among them equally. Already, it is only those few disasters with high casualty rates which grab global attention, leading to underfunding from the rest.

Paula Dupraz-Dobias

The New Humanitarian

7 June 2022

Vulnerable nations demand funding for climate losses, fearing UN 'talk shop'

The Glasgow dialogue has emerged as a venue for climate-vulnerable countries to seriously discuss their needs including more finance for climate adaptation and compensation for losses and damages. However, there has been pushback from the more developed economies.

Megan Rowling and Beh Lih Yi

Thomson Reuters Foundation

8 June 2022

Extreme weather and climate events likely to drive increase in gender-based violence

As the climate crisis increases the intensity and frequency of extreme weather and climate-related events, this in turn risks increasing the number of cases of gender-based violence.

University of Cambridge

13 June 2022

Satellites zoom in on cities' hottest neighborhoods to help combat the urban heat island effect

As temperatures in cities continue to climb, technology has become more important to track areas of high heat so that cities can prepare for and respond to this urban risk.

Daniel P. Johnson

The Conversation

14 June 2022

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Global risk-informed development guide

This multi-page resource provides practical advice on the risk-informed development planning process. It aims to strengthen the capacity of civil society organisations to engage in transformative risk-informed development planning with communities most at risk.

Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction

2022

For profit and progress: Rethinking the role of the private sector in humanitarian action

This paper provides a conceptual overview of the shift in the private sector's engagement in humanitarian action and DRM. There is a heightened recognition for businesses to safeguard their own operations from disasters while implementing development interventions that address the needs of affected populations.

Killian T. Murphy, Edwin M. Salonga, and Ashfaque Zaman

Centre for Humanitarian Leadership

2022

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Challenges to the Implementation of Modern Technologies in Disaster Management

This webinar discussed the main concerns surrounding the use of data-empowered technologies such as privacy, bias, human rights, data governance and other ethical and legal challenges to the developing and deploying of new technologies.

Recorded Webinar

4 May 2022

National Disasters Expo Asia

The Natural Disasters Expo Asia showcases the latest and most effective products, technologies, services and strategies to predict, prevent, mitigate, manage and recover from natural disasters.

Event

7 - 8 December 2022

MIGRATION

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Childcare is a critical need for women refugees. It must be made a priority

Childcare is a significantly underfunded resource for displaced people and infants. Access to reliable childcare is especially important for refugees in protracted crises.

Lucy Basset and Mari Ullmann

The New Humanitarian

23 May 2022

Rohingya refugees need sustained support from international community

As the Ukraine war rages and the Afghan refugee crisis worsens, there is a concern that the attention of international donors are shifting away from the plight of the Rohingya.

Shafi Md Mostofa

The Diplomat

1 June 2022

Ukraine war: Poland's Duda warns of migration 'problems'

If the war in Ukraine leads to food shortages in large parts of the world, mass migration to Europe is likely to increase – particularly from North Africa which relies on Ukraine for significant amounts of its grain.

Al Jazeera and news agencies

24 May 2022

Scabies rips through crowded Rohingya refugee camps

The rapid spread of scabies through the Rohingya camps highlights the severe overcrowding of the Rohingya refugee camps and lack of adequate medication, water, and sanitation facilities.

Syed Samiul Basher Anik

The New Humanitarian

6 June 2022

At Poland's borders, Ukrainians are welcomed while refugees from elsewhere face a growing crackdown

Although Ukraine's refugees are welcomed, refugees from other parts of world including Belarus, Iraq and Yemen are being forced to endure violent pushbacks.

Hanna Davis

The New Humanitarian

26 May 2022

Please, go home: How COVID-19 halted labor migration

With more than half of all migrant workers from Asia, their remittances do not just support their families but, in some countries, also stabilise their national economies. As COVID-19 spread, this caused an 'employment gap' with migrant workers.

Kristie Pladson

DW

7 June 2022

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Delivering the UK's international development strategy: Key considerations for UK aid

This report unpacks the UK's new International Development Strategy. By looking at its priorities and setting out key context and recent trends in UK aid, this report outlines top-line considerations for the UK.

Anna Hope and Verity Outram

2022

Moving targets: Social protection as a link between humanitarianism, development and displacement

This paper reviews the relationship between a humanitarian response to initial displacement and longer-term development planning, as well as the recent range of research and policy responses in this field.

Michael Colleyer et al

BASIC Research Working Paper 17

Brighton: Institute of Development Studies

2022

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

The dangers of border technology for refugees

This podcast brings together experts in the field to discuss the growing use of technology in border patrol and surveillance, and its consequences for refugees and migrants.

Recorded Podcast

19 May 2022

Migrant Integration Governance After the Pandemic: Lasting Adaptations?

This webinar will examine how government strategies, practices, and instruments of integration policymaking have adapted during the pandemic.

Webinar

30 June 2022