

Stichting The Ocean Cleanup

Batavierenstraat 15
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The Ocean Cleanup: statement to the 2022 United Nations Ocean Conference**A CLEANUP OF EPIC PROPORTIONS**

Trillions of pieces of plastic float on the surface of our oceans today. This unimaginable number has grown exponentially in recent decades, and the trend is forecast to worsen. This trash gathers in massive gyres forming vast, growing expanses of floating plastic waste spanning hundreds of kilometers. The largest, the Great Pacific Garbage Patch (GPGP), contains over 100 million tons of plastic.

The Ocean Cleanup has a singular mission: ridding the oceans of plastic. We design and scale technologies to remove existing 'legacy' plastic from the ocean gyres where it has accumulated over many years, alongside our complementary program to intercept plastic in rivers and prevent it reaching the ocean in the first place, which is the fastest and most cost-effective way to tackle the inflow.

Through this dual strategy we aim to remove 90% of floating ocean plastic by 2040.

HOW WE CLEAN THE OCEAN

The Ocean Cleanup is a non-profit organization based in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, founded in 2013 by 18-year-old Boyan Slat, who became the youngest-ever recipient of the United Nations Champions of the Earth award in 2014. The Ocean Cleanup deployed its first cleaning operation – System 001, known as Wilson – in 2018.

Through constant innovation and cutting-edge iteration, the first extraction of plastic from the GPGP took place in 2019. System 001 has since evolved to System 002 – Jenny – to conduct cleanup operations throughout 2021 and 2022. Our iterative approach has proved that our ocean cleanup system is ready to combat the plastic problem responsibly, at scale and with maximum impact. Our latest ocean cleanup solution – System 03 – is in preparations for deployment and will act as our blueprint to scale up to a larger fleet of cleanup systems across the GPGP.

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Such an ambitious challenge requires in-depth research and access to innovative technology. The Ocean Cleanup's researchers, scientists and engineers continually strive to improve our knowledge of the problem. Our groundbreaking studies on plastic pollution are published open source and are made available to all, and we'll continue to invest to better understand and find solutions to the plastic pollution problem.

We thank all our partners (currently including The Coca-Cola Company, Maersk, Kia, rock band Coldplay, and the Government of the Netherlands) who have assisted us with both financial and in-kind support. Oceans don't have owners, and we are all stakeholders in this challenge. We welcome efforts to achieve the goals of the 2022 UN Oceans Conference and build a cleaner and more responsible future for our planet. We encourage others to join us in this historic challenge to rid the oceans of plastic.

A WORSENING THREAT

As existing waste continues to be topped up with plastic emissions from rivers, the devastating consequences of ocean plastic are becoming inescapable closer to home; from vast deposits of plastic waste decimating previously pristine beaches, to marine autopsies revealing undigested plastic toothbrushes, bottle caps and personal protective equipment discarded during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Awareness of the threat posed by ocean microplastics adds urgency to this problem. The longer this legacy plastic stays in the ocean, the more it degrades and emits more microplastics to be consumed by marine life, entering the food chain – a food chain that ends with us.

Most plastic that enters these gyres will never leave, and will continue to degrade for decades. In order to rid our oceans of plastic, it's not enough just to stop new emissions from rivers – for truly clean oceans, we must clean up the legacy plastic that has built up over decades.

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We support the recognition of the unprecedented threats posed by plastic pollution to biodiversity, habitats and human health through the 2022 Ocean Conference Political Declaration, 'Our ocean, our future, our responsibility' and the UN Environment Assembly Resolution, 'End Plastic Pollution: Towards a legally binding instrument'. These commitments provide a mandate for action; The Ocean Cleanup is ready to support those who grasp this mandate.

We are committed to ridding the oceans of plastic. We invite states to partner with us and be seen at the forefront of the largest cleanup in history.

Boyan Slat, Founder and CEO of The Ocean Cleanup

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