



## 2022 United Nations Ocean Conference Side Event

*[Racing for Clean Seas: Sport as a game change in promoting ocean health and accelerating the implementation of SDG 14]*

[Tuesday 28 June 2022, 1:00-2:15PM, Altice Arena, Main Committee Room, EVENT ID: IBZT289]  
Organized by: [United Nations Environment Programme, Arabian Ocean Rowing Team, Big Plastic Pledge, International Olympic Committee, Fundación Ecomar, Mirpuri Foundation]

**TWO PAGE MAXIMUM**

### **Background on the event (one paragraph)**

In 2017, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) launched the [Clean Seas campaign](#) through a broad-based, global, public-facing effort to win meaningful action from governments, industry, and civil society. With the goal of tackling the global issue of plastic waste entering our world's lakes, waterways, and oceans, the campaign has become a catalyst for change, transforming habits, practices, standards, and policies. Almost 70 Member States, having joined the campaign, have made significant commitments to prevent and reduce marine litter and plastic pollution entering marine environments. Furthermore, the Clean Seas campaign is linked to the [New Plastics Economy Global Commitment](#) which is being led by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, in collaboration with the UN Environment Programme. Through the Global Commitment, businesses and governments commit to changing how we produce, use, and reuse plastic and work to eliminate the plastic items we don't need; innovate so all plastic we do need is designed to be safely reused, recycled, or composted; and circulate everything we use to keep it in the economy and out of the environment. The Global Commitment has already mobilised over 500 signatories that are determined to start building a circular economy for plastic. In response to the passing of the [14 resolutions at the UN Environment Assembly \(UNEA 5.2\)](#) in February 2022, and specifically the resolution focused on [ending plastic pollution](#), the Clean Seas campaign aims to support the full adoption and implementation of these resolutions, in addition to developing a globally legally binding treaty to end plastic pollution ahead of the Sixth United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6). The side event at the UNOC brought together Clean Seas partners to discuss the critical role partnerships have played in the campaign's mission to raise public awareness in acting against marine litter and encouraging governments across the globe to implement policies and initiatives strategically focused on plastic pollution prevention, using the power of sport.

### **Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)**

- The United States of America and the European Commission have officially joined the Clean Seas Campaign, demonstrating their commitment to ending plastic pollution. In doing so, they acknowledge the need to curb the flow of marine litter and plastic pollution entering lakes, rivers,

and the ocean and, in effect, are providing greater engagement to the biggest campaign devoted to ‘turning the tide’ against plastic.

- With the United States of America and the European Commission joining newcomers Cabo Verde, Portugal, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda, 69 Member States have now joined the campaign, covering more than 76 per cent of the world’s coastline.
- Sport has an unrivaled capacity to motivate and inspire large numbers of people. It is therefore critical that we utilize the power and capacity of sport to build a better and more sustainable world.
- Sport and the sports sector and industry has both a duty and an opportunity to contribute actively to global sustainability and more specifically to ocean conservation as the ocean is central to reducing global greenhouse gas emissions and stabilizing the earth’s climate.
- So many of us use our seas, lakes, mountains and parks to get involved in sport. Plastic pollution in the environment can have a direct impact on the sports we love, from surfing and sailing, to hiking, cycling, running and football practice. Sporting events can also be an immense contributor to the plastic pollution problem – generating huge amounts of plastic waste.
- Across the sporting world we can make a positive difference – eliminating single-use plastic items, reducing the amount of plastic we use and recycling as much as possible. We have the power of sport to encourage millions of fans to take action for the environment.

#### **Key recommendations for action (5 - 6 bullet points)**

- The sport industry has a unique platform and affinity with the general public to lead by example, demonstrating how to get things done and create actionable change, and in doing so, inspire individual behaviour change.
- Governments will change policies once a groundswell of individual action is formed. Governments have the power to implement regulations and legislation to curb plastic consumption and use, but ultimately consumers have the spending power to influence businesses. If individuals are more deliberate on consuming or using sustainable products, companies will be forced to change as well.
- Sport provides a powerful avenue and platform to educate individuals on the lasting effects of plastic pollution, and the necessary lifestyle choices and consumption patterns that must be changed in order to create collective change.

#### **Voluntary Commitments (one paragraph)**

- The United States of America has made significant strides in its actions to reduce plastic pollution. In 2021, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published the [National Recycling Strategy](#), reaffirming the goal to increase the U.S. recycling rate to 50 percent by 2030. Through pursuing a Sustainable Materials Management (SMM) approach, the EPA aims to reduce the environmental impacts of materials across their lifecycle. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Marine Debris Program forms partnerships across the United States and internationally to support local and national efforts to drive more sustainable behaviors and reduce the generation of waste and marine debris. NOAA funds locally driven, community-based marine debris removal projects around the United States and supports the monitoring of debris amounts and types in shoreline environments. NOAA also funds research and advances science to help understand debris baselines, chemicals in plastics, debris detection, plastic ingestion by wildlife, economic implications, and how to minimize the impacts of derelict fishing gear.
  - The EPA also initiated the WasteWise Program which works with businesses, governments, and non-profit organizations [to promote the use and reuse of materials](#) more productively over their entire life cycles, while the US Department of Energy

(DOE) developed a Strategy for Plastics Innovation which coordinates various initiatives on plastic recycling, degradation, upcycling, and design for circularity.

- The European Commission supports a broader EU-wide ban on some single-use plastics products for which easily available and affordable alternatives exist. The Directive on single-use plastics aims to prevent and reduce the impact on the environment of certain plastic products and promote a transition to a [circular economy](#) through a variety of new measures, requiring a sustained quantitative reduction in consumption of certain single-use plastics for which there are no alternatives. Furthermore, a collection target of 90% for single-use plastic beverage bottles has been set by 2029, while incorporating 25% of recycled plastic in PET beverage bottles from 2025, and 30% in all plastic beverage bottles from 2030.