

Our Ocean

Circulate Capital, Ocean Conservancy, National Geographic Society

Oslo, Norway | October 23-24, 2019

Session Title: Science, Policy and Finance to Solve Ocean Plastic

Location: Clarion Hotel, The Hub

Date/Time: October 23 @ 17.30 to 18.30

Attendees: Open to all delegates

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Approximately nine million tons of plastic waste ends up in the ocean each year, threatening our ecosystems, wildlife and human health. This topic has received considerable attention in the media, through grassroots to global campaigns, and increasingly in international policy, with governments committing to reduce or eliminate single-use plastic.

The first United Nations Conference to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 was held in New York in June 2017. The registry of voluntary commitments from relevant stakeholders showed 1,419 commitments made to improve the health of the oceans under SDG 14. Commitments to tackle the problem of plastic in the ocean featured prominently, accounting for one quarter of all commitments and representing two thirds of the 561 commitments relating specifically to SDG 14.1.

This side event will bring together multiple organizations and sectors to demonstrate how science, policy, and finance can be used to solve the issue of ocean plastic. The National Geographic Society will begin by sharing the initial results of their Sea to Source: Ganges expedition, a female-led interdisciplinary program to track plastics in the Ganges river from the Bay of Bengal to its source in the Himalayas. The presentation will include engaging maps and data visualizations and discuss a new, open access methodology to document plastic in watersheds (on land and water), as well as dispel some widespread myths about riverine contributions to ocean plastic pollution from a scientific perspective. The aim of the expedition is to provide concrete science to support solutions in Bangladesh and India, and the hope is to continue these expeditions in other locations around the world.

With strong science comes the opportunity to inform strong policies. 80% of the trash in the ocean comes from land and, of that, 75% was never collected. Why? Because waste collection is typically a net cost and often underfunded, especially in rapidly developing Asian economies where consumption is growing faster than infrastructure. Ocean Conservancy's new report *Collect to Protect: A Playbook to Improve Collection to Prevent Ocean Plastic*, provides a systematic look at measures governments (at all levels) and the private sector can take to improve the economics of collection to keep trash out of the

ocean. This comprehensive analysis is a resource for developing locally-appropriate solutions to the problem of trash in the ocean.

A critical piece of solving the ocean plastic problem is creating effective and efficient waste collection and recycling systems. These systems also form the basis for the fully circular economies of the future. Research has shown that a major barrier to establishing these systems is a lack of investment funding to support the entrepreneurs who drive innovation and growth in the sector. Circulate Capital and The Circulate Initiative are working closely with public and private sector partners to support these entrepreneurs, incubate their ideas, and catalyze investments from a range of actors. At the same time, we are helping to build the “ecosystems” of public policy and education that they need to succeed, resulting in locally appropriate and sustainable solutions to stop ocean plastic leakage as well as create jobs and improve public health and safety. These solutions can then be shared through The Incubator Network, a multi-tiered effort to reduce plastic flow to the ocean by increasing the quality and quantity of waste management and recycling companies while improving economic development and gender outcomes.

There is no silver bullet to the issue of ocean plastic. It is a dynamic problem that demands dynamic solutions. The speakers and stories from this event will demonstrate to the audience that the issue of plastic waste is not only global and harmful, but most importantly, its solvable.