



UN-HABITAT

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME  
P.O. Box 30030, Nairobi 00100, Kenya  
unhabitat-info@un.org | www.unhabitat.org

FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

## PRESS RELEASE

### First International Day of Zero Waste bolsters actions to address global pollution crisis

**Nairobi, 30 March 2023** – In response to the worsening impacts of waste on human health, the economy and the environment, the world today marked the inaugural [International Day of Zero Waste](#), which encourages everyone to prevent and minimize waste and promotes a societal shift towards a circular economy.

“The waste crisis is undermining the Earth’s ability to sustain life in all its forms. Waste costs the global economy billions of dollars each year,” United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said on the Day. “Humanity is treating our planet like a garbage dump. We are trashing our only home. .... It’s time to fight back, and launch a war on waste on three fronts.”

Established through a [UN General Assembly resolution](#) that followed other resolutions on waste, including the 2 March 2022 UN Environment Assembly’s commitment to advance a [global agreement to end plastic pollution](#), the International Day of Zero Waste is jointly facilitated by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). The Day calls upon all stakeholders – including civil society, businesses, academia, local communities, women and youth – to engage in activities that raise awareness of zero-waste initiatives.

Humanity generates more than [2 billion tons](#) of municipal solid waste annually, of which 45 per cent is mismanaged. Without urgent action, municipal solid waste will double to almost 4 billion tons each year by 2050. Waste comes in all forms and sizes – including plastics, debris from mining and construction sites, electronics and food. It disproportionately impacts the poor, with up to [4 billion people](#) lacking access to controlled disposal facilities.

The International Day of Zero Waste aims to bring these myriad impacts of waste to the world’s attention and encourage global action at all levels to reduce pollution and waste.

“Waste management is critical to overcoming housing challenges, including how we manage our cities’ sanitation challenges and, indeed, the climate crisis,” UN-Habitat Executive Director Maimunah Mohd Sharif said. “It is central to improving the lives of people everywhere.”

In its resolution to establish the Day, the UN General Assembly underlined the potential of zero-waste initiatives and called upon all stakeholders to engage in “activities aimed

at raising awareness of national, subnational, regional and local zero-waste initiatives and their contribution to achieving sustainable development”.

Promoting zero-waste initiatives can help advance all the goals and targets in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including [Sustainable Development Goal 11](#) on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable and [Sustainable Development Goal 12](#) on ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns.

“We need to act now,” UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen said. “We have the technical expertise and the drive to innovate. We have the knowledge – both scientific and indigenous knowledge – to find solutions to the waste crisis.”

“The first International Day of Zero Waste is a real opportunity to build on local, regional and national initiatives to foster environmentally sound waste management and to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals,” she added.

Türkiye, which put forward the resolution alongside 105 other countries, is among the leaders of the zero-waste movement. Türkiye launched its zero-waste project in 2017 under the leadership of Her Excellency Emine Erdoğan, the First Lady. On the margins of the UN General Assembly in 2022, the First Lady of Türkiye and the UN Secretary-General signed a goodwill document to extend the country's zero-waste project globally.

“The Zero Waste Project, which we launched five years ago, is an important step to take action in response to nature's call for help,” Her Excellency Emine Erdoğan said. “Zero waste has grown over the years – person by person, city by city and region by region – to become a global movement that extends beyond the borders of our country. I sincerely believe that this date will mark the beginning of better days for the world, our common home.”

To mark the International Day of Zero Waste, businesses, governments, non-profits and more are hosting events all over the world. These include community information sessions, e-waste and food collection drives, fashion shows, photo exhibitions and conferences.

UNEP, including through its One Planet Network and UN-Habitat will undertake campaigns and concerted outreach efforts in the build-up to observations of International Day of Zero Waste on 30 March every year to continue rallying support and action on the importance of zero waste.

The President of the UN General Assembly has convened a high-level meeting in New York to provide a platform to exchange the experiences and success stories of Member States in developing and implementing solid waste management solutions and technologies. On this occasion the Secretariat General of the United Nations is preparing to announce his Advisory Board of Eminent Persons on Zero Waste, in accordance with the UN General Assembly resolution to promote zero-waste initiatives to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

### **About the International Day of Zero Waste**

The [International Day of Zero Waste](#), observed for the first time on 30 March 2023 and jointly facilitated by UNEP and UN-Habitat, aims to raise awareness of the importance of zero waste and responsible consumption and production practices and urban waste management contributing to achieving sustainable development. The Day calls on rethinking our practices and for embracing a circular economy, which means reducing resource use and emissions to the environment throughout all stages of products' life cycles, as a key for addressing the triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature loss and pollution, and putting the planet, and humanity, on a path to health and prosperity.

### **About the UN Environment Programme (UNEP)**

UNEP is the leading global voice on the environment. It provides leadership and encourages partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.

### **About the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)**

[UN-Habitat](#) is the United Nations entity responsible for sustainable urbanization. It has programmes in over 90 countries that support policymakers and communities to create socially and environmentally sustainable cities and towns. UN-Habitat promotes transformative change in cities through knowledge, policy advice, technical assistance, and collaborative action.

### **For more information, please contact:**

[News and Media Unit](#), UN Environment Programme

[News and Media Unit](#), UN-Habitat