



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

### Inaugural World Cleanup Day launches in Norway

**Tromsø, Norway, 20 September 2024** – Today, people from around the globe gathered in Tromsø, Norway, to celebrate the inaugural World Cleanup Day, an initiative organized this year by UN-Habitat, GRID-Arendal, and the Norwegian Retailers' Environment Fund (NREF), in collaboration with the Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, the Municipality of Tromsø, Fram Centre, and Let's Do It World. World Cleanup Day aims to mobilize communities worldwide in the fight against waste pollution, raising awareness of the urgent need to address the growing global crisis of mismanaged waste and plastic pollution.

The world currently produces over 2 billion tonnes of waste annually. Without immediate action, this figure is expected to increase dramatically by 2050. In low- and middle-income countries, more than 90 per cent of collected waste is improperly disposed of in uncontrolled facilities or burned. This year's World Cleanup Day theme of "Arctic Cities and Marine Litter" focused on protecting vulnerable ecosystems, particularly in sensitive regions like the Arctic.

"Today marks a pivotal moment in our global fight against waste pollution. World Cleanup Day serves as a powerful reminder of the essential role our cities play in this effort," said Anacláudia Roszbach, Executive Director of UN-Habitat. "Every action – no matter how small – helps shape our urban spaces into cleaner, greener, and more resilient environments. Together, we can transform cities into accelerators and catalysts of sustainability for all."

World Cleanup Day seeks to unite individuals through community action, highlighting the critical issues surrounding waste management and environmental sustainability. The initiative encourages participation from all sectors, including United Nations Member States, international and national organizations, civil society, the private sector, and academia. Together, they aim to raise awareness of the significant role clean-up efforts play in sustainable development.

"As the host city for the first-ever UN World Cleanup Day, Tromsø is proud to stand at the forefront of global environmental action," said Gunnar Wilhelmsen, Mayor of Tromsø. "As an Arctic city, we understand the urgency of protecting vulnerable ecosystems, and today, we are joining forces with the world to ensure a cleaner, more sustainable future for all."

"We are proud to showcase a Norwegian model of financing that ensures that environmental goals are reached," said Sigrun Wiggen Prestbakmo, State Secretary, Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development in Norway.

The World Cleanup Day programme included various activities designed to emphasize local and global efforts, including roundtables on the challenges and opportunities in waste management; discussions on the synergies of community and professional clean-ups and on the importance of clean-ups in vulnerable areas like the Arctic; and hands-on waste sorting activities.

Speaking on behalf of NREF, Cecilie Lind expressed Norway's pride in hosting the event: "We are honoured to share our knowledge and inspire other nations to implement professional, nationwide clean-ups. Our 'Cleanup Norway in Time' initiative has already removed more than three million kilograms of plastic and waste, and we hope this day motivates similar actions worldwide."

As volunteers across the globe engaged in cleanup activities today, UN-Habitat and its partners aim to set a powerful example of collective action.

“World Cleanup Day empowers the public to fight waste and provides a platform for leaders to push for a comprehensive global plastics treaty,” reflected Karen Landmark, GRID-Arendal.

World Cleanup Day is expected to become an annual observance, reminding people of our shared responsibility to protect the planet.

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**About UN-Habitat**

UN-Habitat is the United Nations entity responsible for sustainable urbanization. It has programmes in over 90 countries supporting 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. To know more, visit [unhabitat.org](https://unhabitat.org) or follow us on X @UNHABITAT.

**For further information, please contact:**

Katerina Bezgachina  
Chief of Communications  
UN-Habitat  
[ekaterina.bezgachina@un.org](mailto:ekaterina.bezgachina@un.org)

Maria Dalby  
Head of Media Relations  
GRID-Arendal  
+47 9064 0556  
[Maria.dalby@grida.no](mailto:Maria.dalby@grida.no)

Stian Kallekleiv  
Head of Communications  
Norwegian Retailers' Environment Fund  
+47 9180 5087  
[stian@handelensmiljofond.no](mailto:stian@handelensmiljofond.no)