

Plastics in the Life Cycle / SCP

Geneva Beat Plastic Pollution Dialogues

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THE LIFE CYCLE APPROACH TO PLASTIC POLLUTION

Plastics are embedded in global and complex value chains. **Negative impacts** on human health and the environment occur throughout the **life cycle** of plastic products, underscoring the need to move beyond linear business models [1]. In that regard, the growing use of and demand for **single-use** plastic products (SUPP) is especially concerning [2].

Transforming the plastic economy by mainstreaming **circularity** and fostering **sustainable consumption and production** is essential to comprehensively address plastic pollution in the long-term. This requires developing effective solutions to reduce impacts in both up- and downstream processes. This summary highlights current efforts in that direction at the national, regional and global level, and recommendations to move this agenda forward.

CURRENT EFFORTS

Several **countries** are taking steps to promote circularity, such as regulation on SUPP, extended producer responsibility (EPR) schemes, improved waste management and recycling systems and other initiatives. Public-private **partnerships** and networks, such as the Global Plastic Action Partnership [3] and the New Plastic Economy [4], further support these efforts by fostering **multi-stakeholder** dialogue and catalyzing action and investments for circularity and innovation.

Additionally, international organizations carry out substantive work in support of sustainable consumption and production. The **Life Cycle Initiative** led by the UN Environment Programme supports data-informed policy and has conducted significant comparative work on life cycle assessment of SUPP and some of their alternatives [5]. The UN Guidelines for **Consumer Protection** also provides cross-cutting recommendations to promote sustainable consumption [6].

NEXT STEPS

Action must be intensified to scale up and harmonize the current fragmented efforts to address the impacts of the plastic life cycle. Recommendations include:

- ▶ Promote **circular business models** and reusable products
- ▶ Develop **policy measures**, including well-designed EPR schemes
- ▶ Increase public and private **finance** capabilities to scale up circular economy
- ▶ Further **research** on the characteristics and impacts of plastic products and materials
- ▶ Foster **multi-stakeholder dialogue** with governments, businesses, civil society, academia and international organizations to promote sustainable consumption and production
- ▶ Empower consumers and public buyers through **information** and education
- ▶ Support a **global agreement** with enhanced cooperation and a financial mechanism to enable States to address plastic pollution in the life cycle