

# WORLD CLEANUP DAY

20 September 2024



## Inaugural World Cleanup Day 2024 Concept Note

**Date and location:** 20 September 2024, Tromsø, Norway

**Theme:** Arctic Cities and Marine Litter

Hosted in **Tromsø, Norway** with support from UN-Habitat, GRID-Arendal and the Norwegian Retailers' Environment Fund and in collaboration with the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, Municipality of Tromsø, the Fram Center and Let's Do It World.

### Background Information

The world generates over 2 billion tonnes of municipal solid waste annually, of which almost half is mismanaged<sup>1</sup>. Mismanaged waste, which is neither collected nor managed in controlled facilities, negatively impacts human health and contributes to worsening the triple planetary crisis: climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. Meanwhile, approximately 2.7 billion people globally lack access to basic collection services, and, without immediate action, waste generation is on track to increase to 3.8 billion tonnes by 2050<sup>2</sup>.

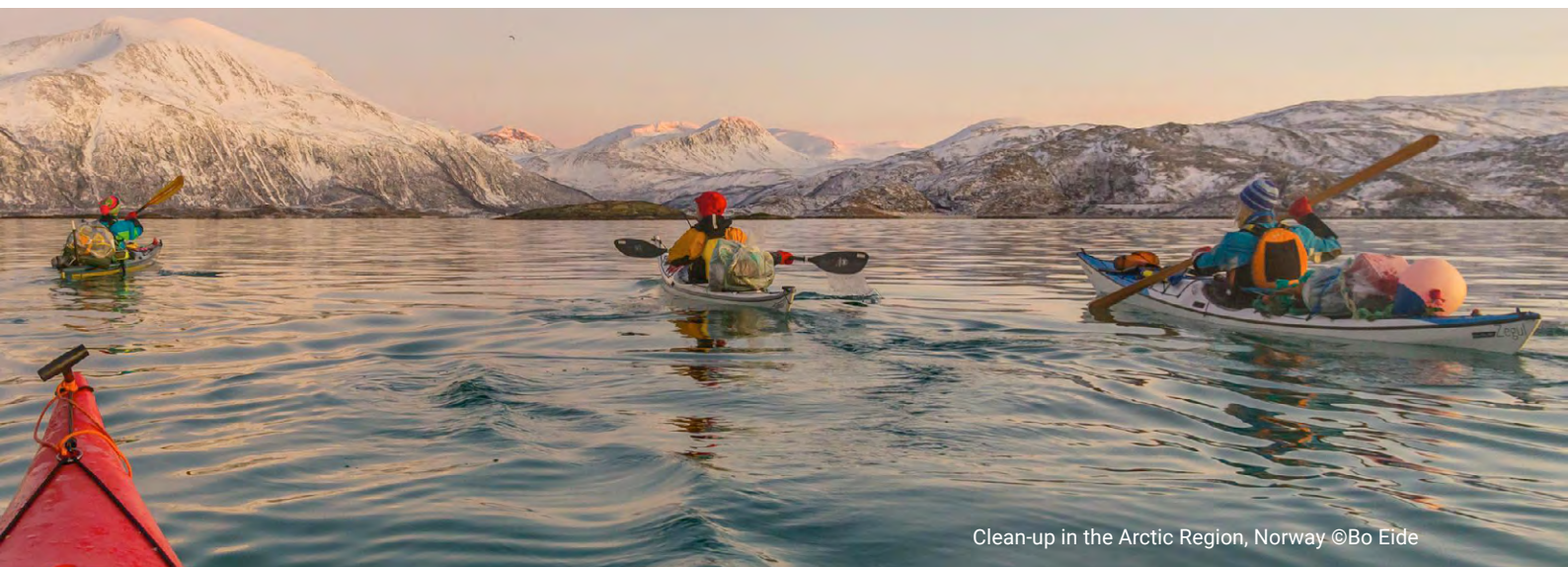
To achieve a sustainable and waste-free future, it is essential to prevent waste generation and to manage existing waste. World Cleanup Day provides a powerful platform to raise awareness about the millions of tons of mismanaged waste globally. By mobilizing cities worldwide to clean up litter and waste, we can make immediate strides in mitigating the impact of waste on our environment. This global initiative complements the Zero Waste movement by addressing present waste and inspiring action to reduce future waste generation.

On 8 December 2023, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) officially established World Cleanup Day in its [resolution A/78/122](#), to be annually observed on 20 September. The resolution welcomes the contribution of World Cleanup Day activities to date to addressing the environmental challenges associated with waste management by mobilizing people globally to participate in coordinated voluntary action, empowering collaboration, and raising broad awareness of the need to reduce waste pollution tangibly. The resolution invites all Member States, organizations of the United Nations system, other international and regional organizations, and other relevant stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector and academia, to observe World Cleanup Day, through cleanups and other activities aimed at raising awareness of its contribution to achieving sustainable development.

<sup>1</sup> <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unep.org/resources/global-waste-management-outlook-2024>.

The day aims to mobilise people globally to participate in coordinated voluntary action, empowering collaboration, and raising broad awareness of the need to reduce waste pollution tangibly. Further, it serves as a powerful reminder of the collective responsibility we share in preserving and maintaining a clean and healthy environment. Its inaugural commemoration will be observed on Friday 20 September 2024 in Tromsø, Norway.



Clean-up in the Arctic Region, Norway ©Bo Eide

### Theme: Arctic Cities and Marine Litter

This year's inaugural event hosted by Tromsø, Norway – also known as the capital of the Arctic – is themed “Arctic Cities and Marine Litter”. The event aims to inspire other cities and communities worldwide to adopt sustainable practices that protect our planet's polar and sub-polar regions.

The Arctic region deserves special attention in plastic and marine litter cleanup efforts. The Arctic ecosystem is highly sensitive to pollution, making effective waste management crucial for preserving biodiversity and ensuring environmental sustainability. However, cities such as Tromsø face unique challenges in managing waste and promoting sustainability. Located within the Arctic Circle, these cities' coastlines experience extreme weather conditions, isolation and remoteness. Long distances, and expensive infrastructure and transportation make waste collection, recovery and disposal processes costly and technically challenging. In addition, the Arctic regions are at the receiving end of ocean currents that bring litter from afar to these shores and rely on collaboration and positive action in many countries to reduce the litter influx to our shorelines.

The Inaugural World Cleanup Day observance in Tromsø aims to highlight specific and effective waste management strategies that have been deployed in Norway, including innovative approaches to reducing waste and recovering resources in harsh climates. Norwegian Arctic cities have found effective ways to leverage innovation, community involvement, networking and collaboration to develop sustainable waste management systems that protect their unique environments and contribute to global efforts in reducing waste and plastic pollution. This event will underscore the potential of professional cleanups and innovative funding mechanisms to address waste management challenges in complex urban environments.

Since the beginning of 2015, Norway has dedicated government funds for cleanup activities, showing a strong commitment and engagement in the cleanup of plastic pollution. Keep Norway Beautiful is an umbrella organisation for voluntary cleanup activities, and in 2022, more than 800,000 Norwegians were involved in cleanups (roughly 14 % of the population<sup>3</sup>).

Starting in 2020, the Norwegian Retailer's Environment Fund (NREF) developed and financed the “Cleanup Norway in Time” programme – the world's first national professional cleanup programme. Between 2021 and 2023, 40 % of the outer coastline has been cleaned from macroplastics<sup>4</sup>. The cleanup programme continues from 2024 onwards intending to increase the percentage of shoreline cleaned to 55 %, in addition to maintenance cleanups in the areas based on a documented need for return<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=NO>

<sup>4</sup> any solid plastic particle or object insoluble in water with any dimension above 5 mm (Source: [https://resolutions.unep.org/resolutions/uploads/10072023\\_ciel.pdf](https://resolutions.unep.org/resolutions/uploads/10072023_ciel.pdf))

<sup>5</sup> <https://handelensmiljofond.no/rydd-i-tide>.