Norwegian Retailers' Environment Fund

GRID ARENDAL
A UNEP Partner

UN-HABITAT

WORLD CLEANUP DAY

20 September 2024

Roundtable two - "Cleanups in Vulnerable and Remote Arctic Areas"

Date: 20 September 2024, Tromsø, Norway
Time: 10:45 - 12:15
Location: Kompasset, Fram Centre

Main Objectives:

- To identify the specific challenges faced in cleaning up remote and vulnerable areas.
- To share successful strategies and practices from various regions or sectors.
- To promote the use of professional clean-ups in remote and vulnerable areas.
- To explore technological innovations that can facilitate cleanups in such vulnerable ecosystems.

Background Information

Currently, the world generates over 2 billion tonnes of municipal solid waste annually, nearly half of which is mismanaged[1]. As a result, a substantial portion of this waste leaks into the environment posing significant risks to ecosystems, especially in vulnerable and remote areas. In the context of this discussion, "vulnerable areas" include regions with fragile ecosystems and those prone to natural disasters, while "remote areas" refer to locations with limited accessibility. These regions often suffer disproportionately from environmental neglect due to their inaccessibility or the need for specialized and costly interventions. Thus, it is crucial to develop effective cleanup and waste management strategies specifically tailored to the unique conditions of such vulnerable and/or remote areas.

The Arctic region, which is both remote and vulnerable, suffers significantly from marine litter and plastic pollution. Factors such as extreme weather conditions, limited and challenging accessibility, large geographical distances, low population density, and minimal infrastructure, contribute to the area's remoteness, complicating cleanup efforts. Furthermore, the Arctic ecosystems are considered to be extremely fragile. Plastic pollution in particular has significant impacts on marine ecosystems in the Arctic. Risks include the entanglement of sea life and even terrestrial animals as debris such as fishing nets reach the shores. Floating plastic has been found to potentially transport non-native species, thus risking the introduction of invasive species into Arctic ecosystems. Further, significant research has shown that as plastic breaks down it is ingested by animals and is increasingly found in Arctic species making its way into every part of the food chain. As such, this area urgently requires specialised and tailored interventions to prevent further disruptions of these already fragile ecosystems.

Norway, which is in the Arctic and has the second longest coastline in the world, is highly impacted by marine

Tromsø kommune

Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development

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debris, reaching some of the most unavailable and remote locations. Indeed, fjords and coves have become hotspots for marine debris but can be hard and dangerous to reach.

This roundtable will explore effective strategies to combat waste pollution through cleanups in vulnerable and remote areas, as a complementary tool to circular waste management systems. By highlighting good practices, the discussion aims to inspire other nations and waste actors to develop and support cleanup activities within their contexts.

Questions for discussion:

1. This roundtable discussion will touch on specific discussion points guided by the following questions:
2. Which unique challenges are faced by large scale cleanup efforts in remote areas?
3. How do cleanup efforts ensure to keep disturbances of natural habitats and birdlife to a minimum?
4. Are waste management facilities in Arctic areas equipped to handle marine litter?
5. Land-based sources: to which degree is urbanisation contributing to Arctic marine litter?

Format:

Following a brief introduction of the session by the moderator. After this, select participants will make their initial interventions (5-7 minutes). Then, the chair will initiate an interactive discussion among the participants, including those from the floor.

Agenda:

1. Welcome and Introduction by the Chair (5 mins)
2. Interventions (speakers, 20 mins)
3. Discussion rounds (55 mins)
4. Wrap up – key takeaways and next steps (10 mins)

Speakers:

Moderators: Helene Svendsen & Eirin Husabø, GRID-Arendal

Speaker 1: Snorre Sklet, SALT/Cleanup Norway in Time

Speaker 2: Anne Katrine Normann, Centre for the Ocean and the Arctic (UiT)

Speaker 3: Geir Wing Gabrielsen, The Norwegian Polar Institute

Supporting documents:

Read more about Clean-up Norway in time - Link
UNEP - Global Waste Management Outlook 2024 - Link
The Arctic: A Sink for Global Pollution - Link
Global Linkages: A Graphic Look at the Changing Arctic - Link
Plastic Pollution in the Arctic - Link
Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter in the Arctic - Link
Desktop study on Marine Litter including Microplastics in the Arctic - Link
Waste management in the Arctic storymap - Link

Notes:

1. UNEP (2024) - Global Waste Management Outlook 2024