

Unsustainable fashion and textiles in focus for International Day of Zero Waste 2025

Nairobi, 27 March 2025 – Ahead of the [International Day of Zero Waste 2025](#), events in Nairobi, New York and across the world have shone a spotlight on waste in the fashion and textiles industry, highlighting the environmental and social challenges of overproduction and overconsumption caused by the sector’s linear business model.

The International Day of Zero Waste – officially observed on 30 March each year – was the focus of a high-level event on 27 March at the UN General Assembly Hall in [New York](#), as well as an event at the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) headquarters in [Nairobi](#), Kenya, on the same day.

Every year, [92 million tonnes](#) of textile waste is produced globally. Production [doubled from 2000 to 2015](#), while the duration of garment use decreased by 36 per cent. Eleven per cent of plastic waste comes from clothing and textiles, with only [8 per cent](#) of textiles fibres in 2023 made from recycled sources.

Discarded clothing often ends up in low-income countries, where lack of waste management infrastructure leads to dumping, burning, and severe environmental and social consequences. Additionally, textile and fashion waste in cities often end up in landfills, where it takes decades to decompose and releases harmful greenhouse gases. A zero-waste approach is key to the required transition to more circular approaches.

“Unsustainable fashion is aggravating the triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature, land and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste,” said Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UNEP. “We need to focus on a circular economy approach that values sustainable production, reuse and repair. By working together, consumers, industry and governments can support genuinely durable fashion and help reduce our fashion footprint.”

On this third observance of the International Day of Zero Waste, UN-Habitat put out a call for submission of zero waste good practices in fashion and textiles to be reviewed and recognized by the [UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Zero Waste](#). The event in Nairobi showcased three practices from Thailand, India and Norway selected by the Board from 220 submissions.

“The rising tide of waste is straining urban infrastructure, public health, and the environment – especially for 1.1 billion people in informal settlements and slums with limited waste collection and sanitation services,” said Anacláudia Rossbach, Executive Director of UN-Habitat. “We are committed to building a future where waste is no longer a problem but a resource.”

Between 1 March and 5 April, dozens of [events](#) are taking place to raise awareness and discuss solutions at the global, national and city level. These include diverse initiatives such as upcycling workshops, clean-up days, tree planting initiatives and toy exchanges, engaging children, youth groups, scientists, refugees, and other stakeholders in countries including Brazil, Canada, Greece, Italy, Malawi, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Uganda, and the USA.

The International Day of Zero Waste was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 14 December 2022 to promote sustainable production and consumption patterns and encourage a shift towards a lifecycle approach, so no materials or resources go to waste. The day is facilitated by UNEP and UN-Habitat.

NOTES TO EDITORS

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 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.

About the International day of Zero Waste

The [International Day of Zero Waste](#), observed on 30 March 2024, was established through UN General Assembly Resolution 77/161, and is jointly facilitated by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). This day aims to raise awareness about the critical role of waste management and responsible consumption and production in achieving sustainable development. It calls on individuals and organizations to adopt a life-cycle approach, focusing on reducing resource use and environmental emissions at every stage of a product's life cycle.

About three practices showcased in Nairobi

[The United Wardrobe Project](#), implemented in Bangkok, Thailand, which transforms textile waste into a cycle of reuse and renewal, cutting 98,000 kilograms of CO₂ emissions and conserving 33 million liters of water.

[LiiS.com](#), from Norway, which leases easily repairable garments to over 270,000 children. This textiles-as-a-service model fosters sustainability at the beginning of life, educating and raising awareness on waste for a whole new generation.

[Closing The Loop Program](#), from Bangaluru, India, which was launched by the Circular Apparel Innovation Factory. This pioneering initiative redirects post-consumer textiles from landfills to markets via textile recovery facilities.

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