



World Cleanup Day

Rethinking textile waste in our cities

Maintaining momentum in collective action

Every second, the equivalent of a **truckload of textiles – over 92 million tonnes annually** – is incinerated or dumped into landfills around the world. Much of this textile waste often ends up along the coasts, streets, and dumpsites of low-income countries. With limited waste management infrastructure, disposal often takes the form of open burning and uncontrolled dumping, leading to severe environmental degradation. Additionally, clothing production has doubled since 2000, while the average lifespan of garments has decreased by 36 per cent.

Our waste systems are critically overwhelmed, driven by toxic mix of textiles, plastics, electronics, food, and packaging that adds up to between **2.1 and 2.3 billion tonnes** of municipal solid waste each year. Global monitoring under SDG 11.6.1 shows that in Africa, for example, only about **52 per cent** of waste is collected, while more than **80 per cent** of generated waste is mismanaged, releasing methane and other pollutants. In addition, **2.7 billion** people worldwide still lack access to solid waste collection and are forced to resort to open dumping.

The fashion and textile industries rely heavily on synthetic fibres derived from fossil fuels, which contribute to microplastic pollution. Discarded garments are often shipped to countries in the Global South, where weak waste management systems lead to serious environmental and social impacts. Marginalized communities are disproportionately affected, facing pollution and deteriorating living conditions.

Leave no waste behind

This second World Cleanup Day, observed on **20 September 2025**, offers a chance to raise global awareness of the growing problem of textile waste and educate both experts and the wider public on the importance of shaping a sustainable future. Last year's inaugural inspired people inspired worldwide to join cleanup activities, including efforts to tackle marine litter in Arctic regions.



A close-up view of a weaving loom in action, crafting upcycled fabric from textile scraps and remnants.
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The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) is building on this momentum to highlight the role of innovation, community-driven collective action, and multi-stakeholder engagement in advancing global waste reduction efforts.

UN-Habitat calls on cities, governments, businesses, academia, textile designers, and youth to join the movement against textile and fashion waste by supporting circular and sustainable urban solutions. As cities confront the rising social and environmental costs of textile overproduction and overconsumption, UN-Habitat underscores the central role of cities and policymakers in driving the shift towards circular textile economies. On this World Cleanup Day, we urge all stakeholders to rethink textiles not as disposable items, but as opportunities to build cleaner, more inclusive, and waste-wise cities.

Platforms and flagship events sparking collective action

Through the Waste Wise Cities programme and the African Clean Cities Platform, UN-provides technical expertise in municipal solid waste management, supporting monitoring, data collection, knowledge sharing, capacity development, and advocacy. In addition, flagship events will be held in cities worldwide to mark the Day, fostering dialogue, innovation and collaboration on cleanup activities.

Register your activities

UN-Habitat invites you to register cleanup activities, commitments to making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, and innovative solutions to textile waste. Register today

A cleaner and more sustainable world starts with the choices we make every day. This World Cleanup Day, let's take action together.

Contact

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