



The Norwegian coastguard was shocked to find huge amounts of plastic waste on the shores of Kiepert Island, a remote part of the Svalbard (Spitsbergen) archipelago, earlier this month. A polar bear could be seen close by as coast guard crewmembers cleaned a few hundred meters of the shoreline of the island in the archipelago north of mainland Europe, about midway between continental Norway and the North Pole.

“I never thought it was this bad. We could have “continued for weeks”, said one of the crewmembers in a tweet from the coastguard.

Between 60 to 90 percent of marine litter is made up of different plastic polymers, and as this example shows, no corner of the world is unaffected. The Norwegian coastguard estimates 95% of the six cubic meters of plastic the crew members collected, originates from the fishing industry, such as trawl nets, fishing nets and ropes.

The Norwegian coastguard conducts beach cleanups between other duties, and this time they brought a crew of young people enrolled in compulsory military service to participate. “It is so important that we do this”, several of the crewmembers said during the cleanup.



“Raising awareness is one of the most important aspects with such cleanups. Here, several hundred kilometers from the mainland and the closest cities, both we and the polar bear are wallowing in plastic waste. Good use of time, fascinating nature and fauna, and with a new, important experience: Don’t throw garbage in the ocean”, said the coast guard in a tweet.

Globally, 8 million tons of plastic ends up in the oceans every year. And the plastic debris kills more than a million seabirds and 100,000 marine mammals annually. In 2017, the UN launched the Clean Seas Campaign to bring countries, civil societies and the private sector on board to combat this global problem.

The Clean Seas campaign has engaged the global society and 42 countries have signed up to the campaign. Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Sweden have committed to implement “the Nordic Programme” on a sustainable approach to plastics by preventing plastic waste, encouraging recycling and promoting a circular economy.

Clean Seas aim to create an unstoppable momentum towards a truly circular, global economy. Raising awareness of what we use, how we use and reuse products is essential to create global

change towards a sustainable world.

“Our aim is to redefine the world’s relationship with plastics because that is the only way to save our seas. Only by fundamentally transforming the way we consume can we secure the oceans that sustain human life,” said Erik Solheim, UN Environment’s Executive Director.

With the projected growth in consumption, our oceans are expected to contain more plastics than fish by 2050 (by weight) unless we drastically change our relationship with plastic.

The #CleanSeasCampaign supports several of the Sustainable Development Goals. Sustainable Consumption and production, Climate action and life below water are all part of Agenda 2030 that aims to create a sustainable world within the next decade. Read more about the Clean Seas Campaign and take the pledge [here](#).



