



On the occasion of World Water Day

# Plastic Shores



'Plastic Shores' investigates the effects that our disposable society has on the marine environment, particularly with regard to plastics. Travelling from the International Marine Debris Conference in Hawaii to the polluted Blue Flag beaches of Cornwall, the film reveals just how bad the problem of plastic debris is and how it harms aquatic life. There is now not a single beach or sea in the world that is not affected by plastic pollution and the problem is getting worse.

Plastics began as an ecological saviour. It was the billiard ball manufacturers of the 1800s who began the demand for the first plastics, endeavouring to reduce the need for unsustainably harvested ivory. From then on plastics went from strength to strength, with a boom in WW2 as materials such as rubber were in short supply.

But the success of plastic was not without its problems. The introduction of fossil fuels made plastics cheap, durable, and mass-produced. They became disposable.

In 2010, global plastic production reached 300 million tonnes. A third of this was used in disposable packaging. In the UK, 3 million tonnes of plastic are thrown away every year, 1% of the total amount of all plastic manufactured on the planet.

What happens to this plastic when it is thrown away? Most of it makes its way to landfill. Some is recycled or incinerated. The rest escapes into our environment, and to the world's oceans...and nobody knows how long it will stay there. Estimates range from decades to hundreds of thousands of years.



**Edward Scott-Clarke**, environmentalist and film-maker, is the director of "Plastic Shores". Mr Scott-Clarke, began his career raising awareness of environmental issues as a green consultant for a government think-tank. Before long however, he became frustrated with the way the environment was treated within politics and set up the non-profit organisation La Mode Verte to highlight environmental problems more directly to the public. He believes that documentary film making is a fantastic medium to do this. "Plastic Shores" is his first documentary.



**Chris Vanden Bilcke** is the Head of UNEP's Liaison Office to the European Union in Brussels. Prior to joining UNEP, Mr Vanden Bilcke, a Belgian national, served as Head of Unit for Environment and Sustainable Development in the Belgian Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs. His professional career has included assignments with the cabinet of the Belgian federal Environment Minister, with the Permanent Representation of Belgium to the European Union. He participated as delegate in numerous meetings of the UNEP Governing Council, the IEG process, the Commission for Sustainable Development, and several environmental Conventions' governing bodies. Under the Belgian EU presidencies in 2001 and 2010 he co-chaired the Working Party for International Environment Issues in which the 27 define their common positions inter alia on UNEP.



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## *What can I do?*

# Reduce, reuse, and recycle!

**Reduce** your use of plastic products to ensure waste minimisation **Reuse** what you have to save time, money, energy, and resources. **Recycle** to process used materials into new products to prevent waste of potentially useful materials. Limit your consumption of fresh raw materials. Reduce air and water pollution and greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the need for "conventional" waste disposal.

### **Carry reusable shopping bags**

There are plenty of great and trendy alternatives out there, which are easy to carry with you. Similarly, use cloth bags instead of plastic produce bags for your fruits and veggies.

### **Give up bottled water**

Those of you who attended the Cine-ONU screening of "Tapped" know this, and have hopefully stopped buying bottled water a long time ago. Not only does it come in a plastic bottle, but tremendous resources are used to extract, bottle, and ship it. Furthermore, reusable plastic bottles may leach chemicals into the water and aluminium bottles are lined with an epoxy resin, some of which has also been found to leach into water depending on the brand. Bottled water produces 1.5 million tons of plastic waste per year, and these bottles require 47 millions gallons of oil to produce, according to Food and Water Watch. Get a reusable stainless steel bottle instead.

### **Use bar soap instead of liquid hand soap**

It is a myth that a bar of soap is less sanitary - the bar soap gets rinsed off every time it is used, the plastic pump

### **Volunteer**

Contact a local environment NGO, or simply take matters into your own hands and get out there. Arrange cleanup events to help to remove rubbish and debris from oceans, coasts, and waterways. Carry a reusable bag with you and pick up plastic rubbish on beaches, in the forest, in the park -and remember to recycle the waste!

### **Spread the word, and lead by example**

Be the change you want to see—nothing changes if you simply complain from the sofa!

### **Shop at your local farmers market**

Normally, the food at local markets is not wrapped in plastic.

### **Ladies: Use a mooncup instead of sanitary towels and tampons**

One woman uses up to 22 items of sanitary protection every period. These items, their packaging, applicators and backing-strips will end up in landfill or in the sea. The mooncup is a silicone menstrual cup designed by women to be a convenient, safe and eco-friendly alternative to tampons and sanitary pads. Regardless of your flow, you only need one Mooncup, and it lasts for years and years, making it the most economical sanitary product you can buy.

**Say no to unnecessary plastic products**, such as plastic straws, to keep plastic out of the landfill. Cut out sodas, juices, and all other plastic-bottled beverages and choose milk in returnable glass bottles. Skip plastic

### **Give up chewing gum**

Not only are you chewing on plastic, but you may also be chewing on toxic plastic.

### **Use your own cup and cutlery for hot drinks and food at the office**

Limit your use of disposable alternatives!

### **Purchase recycled and reusable materials**

Buy recycled and environmentally friendly paper. Purchase products in bulk to minimize excessive packaging, and use recharged cartridges for laser printers and copiers.

[www.plasticfreeguide.com/](http://www.plasticfreeguide.com/)

[www.mnn.com/lifestyle/responsible-living/photos/16-simple-ways-to-reduce-plastic-waste](http://www.mnn.com/lifestyle/responsible-living/photos/16-simple-ways-to-reduce-plastic-waste)

[www.mooncup.co.uk/](http://www.mooncup.co.uk/)

[www.epa.gov/](http://www.epa.gov/)



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