



Press Release:

The Mississippi River Basin becomes the first ever river system in the world to join the UN Clean Seas campaign

18 September 2019, Memphis, Tennessee -- As the largest navigable river system in the world, cities and towns along the Mississippi River have come together to tackle plastic marine debris as part of the UN Clean Seas campaign through the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative (MRCTI).

Over 8 million tonnes of plastic end up in the ocean annually, causing critical damage to marine life and ecosystems, and economic losses estimated at \$13 billion each year. The Clean Seas initiative is working with governments, the private sector and the public to address this challenge. To date, 60 countries have joined the campaign which now represents the world's largest global alliance for combatting marine plastic pollution with commitments covering more than 60% of the world's coastlines.

Dozens of Mayors from along the Mississippi River are gathering this week in Memphis for the MRCTI Annual Meeting where they convened state legislators, corporate leaders, and industry experts to build a framework for reducing plastic waste in the Mississippi River.

Some 80% of the plastic waste in the world's oceans originates from land-based sources, including from drainage via major river systems. Addressing the plastic pollution that flows into river systems, such as the Mississippi, is a critical action that can help stem the tide of ocean plastic pollution.

"As the first river system to join the UN's Clean Seas campaign, we can do our part to pilot efforts for how to ensure the world's major rivers stop contributing to the plastic pollution of our oceans," said Sharon Weston Broome, Mayor of Baton Rouge, LA and MRCTI Co-Chair. "Mississippi River Mayors are taking action by helping mobilize local communities and working with state legislators and the private sector, to address single-use plastic pollution."

Joining the Clean Seas campaign reinforces MRCTI's goal of inviting as many commitments as possible to reduce plastic waste in the Mississippi River Valley 20% by 2020, by calling on all levels of government and organizations to unite to address this complex issue.

"We are delighted that Mayors along the Mississippi River recognize the critical challenge of plastic pollution in our rivers and marine environments, and are taking action to address it," said Barbara Hendrie, Director, UN Environment North America Office. "With less than 10% of all plastic being recycled globally, we need to rethink the way we design, use and dispose of single-use plastic."

NOTES TO EDITORS

About the United Nations 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. UNEP works with governments, the private sector, civil society and with other UN entities and international organizations across the world.

www.unenvironment.org/regions/north-america

About the Mississippi Rivers Cities & Towns Initiative (MRCTI)

MRCTI was created to provide an influential voice for the Mississippi River. MRCTI addresses infrastructure, community development, river water quality and habitat restoration, flooding and floodplain issues, river-focused recreation, sustainable economies, and celebration of the River culture and history. The Mississippi River is critical natural asset. As the ecological lynchpin to the 31-state Mississippi River Basin, the River supports the most agriculturally productive region on the planet; creates nearly \$500 billion in annual revenue; transports 40 percent of the nation's agricultural output; and directly supports more than one 1.5 million jobs.

<https://www.mrcti.org/>

About Clean Seas

The UN Environment Programme launched #CleanSeas in February 2017, with the aim of engaging governments, the general public, civil society and the private sector in the fight against marine plastic litter. By connecting key stakeholders at all levels, UNEP aims to transform habits, practices, standards and policies around the globe to dramatically reduce marine litter and the harm it causes. An example of voluntary actions on the Clean Seas platform is the commitment from Volvo to ensure that, by the year 2025, at least 25% of plastics used in their new car models comes from recycled material.

www.cleanseas.org

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