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FOR BIODIVERSITY 2025
Harmony with nature and sustainable development



राष्ट्रीय जल मिशन
NATIONAL WATER MISSION



High Level Multi-stakeholder Policy Dialogue on ‘End Plastic Pollution and deliver actions for harmony with nature

Date: 03 June 2025, (4:00-6:00 PM)

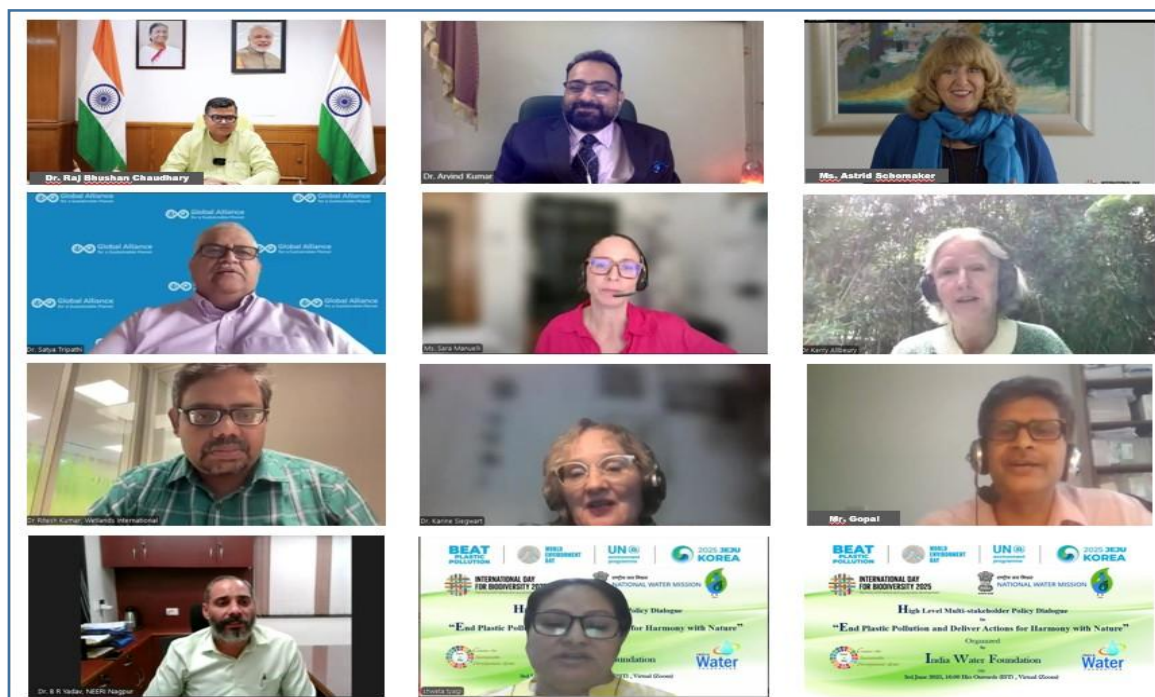
Virtual

Summary Report

Harmony with Nature: Rethinking Sustainability from Source to Sink

Introduction

On June 3, 2025, the India Water Foundation convened a **High-Level Multi-Stakeholder Policy Dialogue** with support from the National Water Mission, Ministry of Jal Shakti, was held virtually to commemorate **World Environment Day** and the **International Day for Biodiversity**. It brought together policymakers, scientists, international experts, and civil society to address the escalating crisis of plastic pollution and its impact on biodiversity. Guided by the adept **moderation of Ms. Shweta Tyagi**, Chief Functionary, India Water Foundation, The dialogue focused on the urgent need for systemic, coordinated, and innovative solutions to end plastic pollution and foster harmony with nature. The dialogue served as a vibrant platform for sharing knowledge, identifying gaps, and formulating a collaborative roadmap to combat plastic pollution through holistic, multi-sectoral actions.



Opening Remarks by **Dr. Arvind Kumar**, President, India Water Foundation, set the tone by highlighting the urgency of addressing the triple planetary crisis—climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss. He stressed that plastic pollution now impacts every ecosystem from mountaintops to ocean trenches and noted the profound presence of microplastics in human bloodstreams, food, and water. He emphasized that addressing plastic pollution must involve understanding the full life cycle of plastics, strengthening international frameworks like the INC Global Plastics Treaty, and aligning with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. He called for robust institutional capacity, inclusive partnerships, and investment in circular economy models.

Chair Address by **Shri Raj Bhushan Chaudhary**, Hon'ble Minister of State, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India wherein he outlined India's multifaceted approach to tackling plastic pollution. He cited the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan as a foundational movement and detailed initiatives under the Swachh Bharat Mission—Grameen and Urban, including the establishment of over 1,790 Rural Plastic Waste Management Units and innovative models like the KabadMandi app for incentivizing household-level recycling. The Minister emphasized the importance of community participation, private sector partnerships, and regulatory frameworks such as the Plastic and Solid Waste Management Rules. He also highlighted the "Catch the Rain – 2025" campaign, linking plastic reduction with water conservation and climate resilience



Co-Chair address by **Ms. Astrid Schomaker**, Executive Secretary, CBD urged synergistic implementation of SDGs and KMGBF, calling for biodiversity mainstreaming across governance, business, and civil society.

Dr. Satya Tripathi (Global Alliance for Sustainable Planet) flagged the risks of corporate capture and delayed action within treaty negotiations. He underscored the need for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), innovative finance models, and real-time accountability mechanisms to transition from ambition to implementation.



Dr. Ritesh Kumar (Wetlands International) cautioned that wetlands, as crucial ecological conduits, are increasingly choked with plastics, threatening biodiversity and ecosystem services. He called for quantifying plastic impacts and mainstreaming plastic management in wetland governance.



Ms. Kerry Allbeury (UNEP INC Secretariat) updated on the INC Treaty Process, urging inclusive engagement, regional consultations, and bridging policy gaps to ensure a legally binding instrument addressing all stages of the plastic life cycle.



Ms. Sara Manuelli (FAO, Mountain Partnership) emphasized the vulnerability of mountain ecosystems, where plastic waste now threatens vital freshwater sources and ecotourism economies. She advocated zero-waste tourism, community-led models, and financial investments for local waste management.



Dr. Karine Siegwart (IUCN) stressed the absence of biodiversity considerations in INC draft texts, advocating for explicit inclusion of biodiversity clauses, rights of Indigenous Peoples, and just transitions in the treaty. She underscored the need for alignment with other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) such as CBD, SDGs.



Dr Gopal Kumar (IWMI) highlighted the need to integrate plastic monitoring into watershed, and river basin management plans, particularly in agricultural landscapes where plastic mulch and packaging waste are rising. He advocated for nature-based solutions and market incentives for recycling.



Dr. Bholu Ram Yadav (CSIR-NEERI) flagged operational bottlenecks such as informal waste sectors, lack of data transparency, and poor segregation. He stressed the need to prioritize upcycling over recycling, develop ICT-based systems for traceability, and incentivize biodegradable alternatives.



Major Challenges Identified:

- Persistent single-use plastic usage despite regulatory bans, due to inadequate enforcement and lack of viable alternatives.
- Fragmented waste management infrastructure, particularly in rural and peri-urban areas.
- Limited public awareness and behavioural inertia regarding plastic use and disposal.
- Insufficient circularity in the plastic value chain, with most plastics used only once before disposal.
- Complexity in recycling multi-layered and composite plastics, such as thermocol (EPS).
- Cross-sectoral coordination gaps between government, private sector, and civil society.

Key Recommendations:

A. Policy Integration and Governance

- Institutionalize Plastic-Biodiversity Linkages: Ensure the Global Plastic Treaty (INC) explicitly integrates biodiversity protection, including a standalone article or clause linking plastic action to biodiversity goals.
- Harmonize National Frameworks: Align India's Solid and Plastic Waste Management Rules with water, biodiversity, and climate policies under a common sustainability framework.
- Strengthen EPR: Mandate traceable EPR implementation, linking formal and informal sectors via digital platforms to prevent greenwashing and ensure compliance.

B. Infrastructure and Implementation

- Decentralized Waste Management: Expand PWMUs in both rural and peri-urban zones. Foster local MRFs with public-private partnerships and invest in logistics for waste transport to recycling centers.
- Mainstream Monitoring in Wetland and Watershed Plans: Embed plastic tracking within National Wetland Inventories, water quality assessments, and river basin management strategies.

C. Finance and Innovation

- Innovative Finance Models: Mobilize outcome-based financing, credit-sharing mechanisms, and ESG-linked investment channels to fund large-scale plastic alternatives and clean-up infrastructure.
- Upcycling Technologies: Incentivize R&D on technologies that convert waste plastics into fuels or raw materials. Pilot large-scale chemical recycling and biodegradable alternatives.

D. Behavioural Change and Community Engagement

- Mission LiFE 2.0 with Circular Economy Focus: Expand Mission LiFE campaigns to specifically include plastic alternatives, circularity principles, and localized zero-waste initiatives.
- Youth and Faith-based Engagement: Leverage educational institutions, religious networks, and influencers to cultivate a culture of environmental stewardship and civic responsibility.
- Data Transparency and Public Dashboards: Develop and promote open data platforms for real-time monitoring of plastic flows, EPR credits, and municipal compliance.

Ms. Shweta Tyagi's closing remarks captured the essence of the event: "The responsibility is not limited to one stakeholder or one government. This will only be possible when governments, companies, and citizens come together to prioritize the planet over convenience and profit." Her emphasis on systems thinking, behavioural change, and shared accountability brought the event to a resonant conclusion.

Annex: Event Programme



High Level Multi-stakeholder Policy Dialogue

To

End Plastic Pollution and deliver actions for harmony with nature

3rd June 2025, 16:00 HRS Onwards (Virtual)

Introduction

Plastics are everywhere now even in the deepest part of the oceans. At least 14 million tons of plastic end up in the ocean every year, and plastic makes up 80% of all marine debris found from surface waters to deep-sea sediments (UNEP, 2024). The result is an estimated \$13 billion in annual environmental damage to marine ecosystems. Plastic pollution affects marine life through various pathways, including ingestion, entanglement, toxic impacts, and more. In a 2016 report, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) recognized that

marine debris is a globally significant stressor on the marine and coastal environment, as studies show that almost 800 marine species are affected by plastic pollution.

Given the persistent nature of plastic and its toxicity, plastic pollution is a significant threat to biodiversity. It threatens ecosystems, animal and plant species, impeding their ability to deliver essential services to humanity. While the leakage of plastics into the ocean and the subsequent impacts of marine life has been most studied, plastic pollution also affects freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems. Indeed, plastic and chemical leakage into the environment may arise at various stages of the plastics life cycle, and the resulting pollutants are transported around the globe through air and oceans streams. Environmental degradation occurs in the upstream, as extraction, fracking, production of plastics and chemical additives release substantial amounts of toxic substances into the air and contaminate the local environment. Disposal is also problematic: incineration of plastic waste releases toxic chemicals and micro- and nano-plastics into the air, while landfills contaminate soil and water. All these elements then impact biodiversity both locally and globally.

Objectives of the Event

The policy dialogue will present an overarching understanding of the linkages through insights from experts on the conceptual framework, research and insights from policies by bringing together stakeholders from international and multilateral organizations, research institutions, and policy-think tanks, with the common agenda to address the grim challenge of plastic pollution. It will highlight and examine how plastic pollution disrupts ecosystems, endangers wildlife, and contributes to biodiversity decline across marine, freshwater, and terrestrial environments. We will align the discussions with global frameworks such as the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Global Plastics Treaty, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to reinforce commitments toward biodiversity conservation and pollution reduction.

Guiding Questions

1. How can governments integrate biodiversity conservation and plastic waste management not only into their national environmental policies but also strict implementation as well?
2. What are the current financial gaps in addressing plastic pollution, and how can innovative financing mechanisms be leveraged to bridge them?
3. What are the key challenges faced by developing nations in strengthening institutional and community capacities to manage plastic waste at all levels and protect biodiversity?
4. How can EPR schemes be effectively implemented across diverse regulatory environments to ensure producers are accountable for the entire lifecycle of their plastic products?
5. What policy measures can governments implement to support the development and adoption of plastic alternatives, particularly in sectors heavily reliant on single-use plastics?

For more details please contact-

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Agenda

16:00 -16:05	Welcome and Introduction	Shweta Tyagi Chief Functionary India Water Foundation
16:05-16:12	Opening Remarks and Overview of the Session	Dr Arvind Kumar President India Water Foundation
16:12-16:20	Chair Address	Sh. Raj Bhushan Chaudhary Minister of State Ministry of Jalshakti, Government of India
Interventions (8 minute each)		
Ms. Astrid Schomaker Executive Secretary Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)		
Dr. Satya S. Tripathi Secretary-General Global Alliance for a Sustainable Planet		
Dr. Ritesh Kumar Director Wetlands International, South Asia		
Ms. Kerry Allbeury Senior Policy Advisor Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) Secretariat, UNEP		
Ms. Sara Manuelli Communications and Advocacy Officer Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)		
Dr. Karine Siegwart Senior Policy Advisor Centre for Policy and Law, IUCN		
Dr. Gopal Kumar Deputy Country Representative for India and Bangladesh International Water Management Institute (IWMI)		
Dr. Bholu Ram Yadav Senior Scientist CSIR-NEERI		
Q and A		
Vote of thanks and sum-up	Shweta Tyagi Chief Functionary, India Water Foundation	