



Eliminating Plastic Pollution by 2040

For Prelims: Eliminating Plastic Pollution by 2040, [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\)](#), Towards Eliminating Plastic Pollution by 2040: A Policy Scenario Analysis, [Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution \(INC3\)](#).

For Mains: Eliminating Plastic Pollution by 2040, Environmental pollution and degradation.

[Source: DTE](#)

Why in News

Recently, [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\)](#) has released the interim report titled **Towards Eliminating Plastic Pollution by 2040: A Policy Scenario Analysis**, ahead of the **Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution (INC3)**.

- The INC3 will be held in Nairobi, Kenya in November 2023 for an international binding agreement on plastic pollution. Earlier INC 2 was held in Paris, France in June 2023.

Note: An interim report refers to a **preliminary or partial report** that is issued before the completion of a full or final report. It's a document that **presents initial findings, analyses, or progress on a particular subject or project**.

What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

- **Current Situation:**
 - In 2022, **21 million tonnes (MT) of plastics** leaked into the environment globally.
 - Under a **business-as-usual scenario**, where no significant changes are made, plastic usage would increase, resulting in a **50% rise in macroplastic leakage** by 2040.
 - This would mean **approximately 30 MT of plastic leaking into the environment**, with 9 MT entering aquatic environments.
- **Scenario Projections:**
 - Stabilizing primary plastic use at 2020 levels by 2040 would still result in **significant plastic leakage (12 MT) by 2040**.
 - However, a scenario of ambitious global action could drastically reduce waste generation, almost eliminating mismanaged waste and nearly eliminating plastic leakage by 2040.
- **Impact of Burgeoning Plastic Use:**
 - The escalating use and disposal of plastics would have adverse effects on the environment (habitat destruction, soil contamination), climate (contributing to greenhouse gas emissions), and human health, **exacerbating the already significant consequences of plastic pollution**.
 - Plastics generate a **variety of life cycle impacts**, including contributing **3.8% of total**

global greenhouse gas emissions (1.9 GtCO₂ e in 2022).

▪ **Cost of Action:**

- Global ambition with early, stringent and co-ordinated policy action could cut plastic waste generation in **2040 by a quarter below baseline**.
- It could virtually eliminate mismanaged waste by 2040 (from 119 to 4 MT), as a result, plastic leakage would also be nearly eliminated (1.2 MT in 2040).
 - Stocks of plastics in rivers and oceans, however, **would still rise from 152 MT in 2020 to 226 MT in 2040** (74 MT less than in the baseline).
- These ambitious global actions to tackle plastic pollution by 2040 **would incur costs amounting to 0.5% of global GDP in 2040**.
- However, these costs exclude the avoided costs of inaction and must be viewed in the context of vastly improved environmental outcomes.

▪ **Financial Needs:**

- Fast-growing countries **with less advanced waste management systems** will require significant investments (over USD 1 trillion between 2020 and 2040) for waste collection, sorting, and treatment.
- International cooperation is deemed crucial due to uneven distribution of costs

▪ **Recommendations:**

- There is a need for **various policy scenarios, emphasizing the necessity of a comprehensive approach** to address plastic pollution throughout its lifecycle.
- Overcoming technical and economic barriers is essential to eliminate plastic leakage by 2040.
- Recycling **breakthroughs and scaling up well-functioning international markets** for scrap and secondary plastics are crucial strategies.

What is the Intergovernmental Negotiation Committee (INC)?

▪ **About:**

- The INC was established in February 2022, at the **5th session** of the [United Nations Environment Assembly \(UNEA-5.2\)](#).
 - UNEA is the governing body of the [UN Environment Programme](#).
- A historic resolution (5/14) was adopted to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment with the ambition to complete the negotiations by the end of 2024.
 - The first session of the INC-1 was held in **Uruguay in 2022**.

▪ **Need:**

- The **rapidly increasing levels of plastic pollution** represent a serious global environmental issue that negatively impacts the environmental, social, economic and health dimensions of sustainable development.
- In the absence of necessary interventions, the amount of plastic waste entering aquatic ecosystems could nearly triple from some 9-14 million tonnes per year in 2016 to a projected 23-37 million tons per year by 2040.

▪ **Objective:**

- Under the **legally binding agreement**, countries will be expected to develop, implement and update national action plans reflecting country-driven approaches to contribute to the objectives of the instrument.
- They will be expected to promote national action plans to work towards the prevention, reduction and elimination of plastic pollution and to support regional and international cooperation.

What are the Initiatives to Tackle Plastic Pollution?

▪ **Indian:**

- [Plastic Waste Management \(Amendment\) Rules, 2022](#)
- [Extended Producer Responsibility \(EPR\)](#)
- [National Dashboard on Elimination of Single Use Plastic and Plastic Waste Management](#)
- [India Plastics Pact](#)
- [Project REPLAN](#)

- **Global:**
 - [European Union' Directive on Single-Use Plastics](#)
 - [Closing the loop.](#)
 - [The Global Tourism Plastics initiative](#)

UPSC Civil Services Exam, Previous Year Questions (PYQ)

Q. Why is there a great concern about the 'microbeads' that are released into environment? (2019)

- (a) They are considered harmful to marine ecosystems.
- (b) They are considered to cause skin cancer in children.
- (c) They are small enough to be absorbed by crop plants in irrigated fields.
- (d) They are often found to be used as food adulterants.

Ans: (a)

Exp:

- Microbeads are small, solid, manufactured plastic particles that are less than 5mm and do not degrade or dissolve in water.
 - Mainly made of polyethylene, microbeads can also be prepared from petrochemical plastics such as polystyrene and polypropylene. They may be added to a range of products, including rinse-off cosmetics, personal care and cleaning products.
- Microbeads, because of their small size pass unfiltered through the sewage treatment system and reach the water bodies. The untreated microbeads in the water bodies are taken up by the marine animals, thus producing toxicity and causing harm to the marine ecosystem.
 - In 2014, Netherland became the first country to ban cosmetics microbeads.
- Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.

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