

PLASTIC AVENGERS MANIFEST 2019

WHAT WILL OUR GREAT-GRANDCHILDREN WISH FOR TODAY'S APPROACH TO HANDLING PLASTIC?

Five principles for a renewed approach to dealing with plastic:

We, the participants united at 'Plastic Avengers Conference' in Pakhuis de Zwijger Amsterdam on the 8th of February 2019, with the aim to fight plastic pollution so as to protect the environment and the health of our current and future generations, establish the following principles in order to reach a sustainable approach to dealing with products made from plastic:

whereas;

synthetics or "plastics" is defined as a broad and varied group of chemical compounds that is created through unnatural chemical processes,

plastics do not or barely bio-degrade, but can however disintegrate into the environment into smaller particles as result of UV radiation, heating and/or friction, as is the case for instance with short-cyclical/single-use packaging,

the use and application of plastics in the past decades has grown exponentially worldwide, and its use is expected to further grow in the coming decades, plastics have replaced other material, as well as act as a catalyzer in the transformation towards our convenience society,

our human behavior has not adapted quickly enough to the developments in use, scale and availability of plastics and the subsequent demands which result from the use of this material;

the wear of synthetics, such as of car tires, paint and the washing of clothes, causes micro-plastic pollution of which the consequences are yet difficult to foresee due to lack of sufficient targeted research, and for which the solutions will be far-reaching from the outset,

a large part of the current response to the environmental impact of plastic litter is focused on physically cleaning up (larger) plastic particles after they have already been exposed to our (aquatic) ecosystems (for a longer period of time),

the collection and sorting as organized by (large) retailers, manufacturers and brand owners in several European countries, often supported by extensive efforts of consumers, only marginally contributes to the reduction of the pollution of plastics and other single-use packaging.

as a movement call for a renewed approach to dealing with plastic, captured in five principles, namely:

1. HE WHO INTRODUCES SHALL RETURN.

Full responsibility of environmental impact lies with the industry.

Retailers, wholesalers, manufacturers and brand owners, both individually and collectively, are fully responsible and finance the organization of high-quality (sorted) plastic collection.

The brand owner, wholesaler, retailer or manufacturer finances the costs for the cleaning up of litter, cleansing of soil and waterways and other costs which are a result of their products being introduced in the market.

The individual and collective responsibility of the manufacturer will ensure that polluting products are replaced with sustainable alternatives.

The waste systems are open and transparent. The directing and control thereof lies with the independent public sector.

2. LESS IS MORE, DIFFERENT IS BETTER

Reduction, reuse and alternative materials.

A yearly reduction in absolute terms of the total amount of single-use plastic packaging and short-cyclical consumer applications of plastic. Investment in alternative services and delivery systems based on the reuse and refilling of products and other innovations that minimize the use of single-use plastic.

Where the chance of pollution exists, alternative and environmentally-friendly materials and/or alternative services are applied.

Bio-degradable plastics or other 'bioplastics' currently do not form an alternative in view of the status of their technological development.

3. THE GREAT INCENTIVE PRINCIPLE

Rewarding good behavior; influencing consumer behavior.

Careful handling of plastics is made as attractive as possible. Packaging is designed such that consumers intuitively handle it properly. No misleading with alleged bio-degradability or a paper-like appearance; if a material is plastic, it looks as such so that it is abundantly clear what is required of the consumer, for instance whether or not to dispose the packaging in the plastic waste container.

Through redesign, smart financial incentives and deposit-return systems for packaging with a high risk of littering, we prevent plastics entering the environment. In situations where packaging is still littered, the cost is borne by the manufacturer so that there is an incentive for change.

Fining polluters, education and informing of consumers about the disadvantageous effects of plastic on the environment and their own responsibility in this, without prejudice plays an important role.

4. SIMPLICITY FIRST

Reduction of toxics, types of plastic and adaptation in design.

Products are adapted such that there is a drastic decrease in harmful additives which they contain. The number of types of plastics introduced in the market is also dramatically reduced. Products that do contain harmful additives are clearly labelled.

5. PICKING UP DATA STOPS CLEANING UP

Monitoring as primary focus in clean-up campaigns

Cleaning up is useful and necessary, however is merely symptom control when data related to the collected littered items is not generated. Through data collection we ensure that the clean-ups are of added value and the issue is solved at the source. The processed data in a uniform system is not limited to litter alone.

Moreover, independent transparent data exists regarding the origin of plastic and its destination post-use. Plastic recycling plants periodically report on the amount of plastic recyclate they have effectively regained from high-quality sorted waste streams.

Participants of the 'Plastic Avengers Conference' in Amsterdam 2019 support the above-mentioned principles that have been drawn up during the PAC2019 and consider these a

snapshot in time. They are aware that innovations and new scientific research can lead to renewed insights which may impact the Manifest established above. The considerations and principles will be reviewed on a yearly basis and where applicable, will be updated.