

# IN DEPTH: Celebrity Backing as UN Declares War on Plastic Waste in the Oceans

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By [Ben Messenger](#)

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UN Environment (UNEP) launched a global campaign to eliminate major sources of marine litter yesterday, including microplastics in cosmetics and the excessive, wasteful usage of single-use plastic by the year 2022.

Launched at the Economist World Ocean Summit in Bali, the [#CleanSeas campaign](#) is urging governments to pass plastic reduction policies; targeting industry to minimise plastic packaging and redesign products; and calling on consumers to change their throwaway habits – before irreversible damage is done to our seas.

"It is past time that we tackle the plastic problem that blights our oceans. Plastic pollution is surfing onto Indonesian beaches, settling onto the ocean floor at the North Pole, and rising through the food chain onto our dinner tables," urged Erik Solheim, Head of UN Environment. "We've stood by too long as the problem has gotten worse. It must stop."

UNEP explained that throughout the year, the #CleanSeas campaign will be announcing ambitious measures by countries and businesses to eliminate microplastics from personal care products, ban or tax single-use bags, and dramatically reduce other disposable plastic items.

Ten countries have already joined the campaign with far-reaching pledges to turn the plastic tide. Indonesia has committed to slash its marine litter by a massive 70% by 2025; Uruguay will tax single-use plastic bags later this year and Costa Rica will take measures to dramatically reduce single-use plastic through better waste management and education.

According to UNEP each year, more than 8 million tonnes of plastic ends up in the oceans, wreaking havoc on marine wildlife, fisheries and tourism, and costing at least \$8 billion in damage to marine ecosystems. Up to 80% of all litter in our oceans is made of plastic.

### **Celebrity Backing**

Media personality Nadya Hutagalung has supported #CleanSeas by calling on the cosmetics industry to stop adding microplastics to their products. As many as 51 trillion microplastic particles – 500 times more than stars in our galaxy – were said to litter the seas, seriously threatening marine wildlife.

Singer-songwriter and UN Environment Goodwill Ambassador Jack Johnson pledged to engage with fans and encourage venues for his 2017 Summer Tour to reduce single-use plastics. Johnson is also promoting a new documentary [The Smog of the Sea](#), which highlights the issue of microplastics permeating the world's oceans.

"I support the Clean Seas campaign because I believe there are better alternatives to single-use disposable plastics, and that we as consumers can encourage innovation and ask businesses to take responsibility for the environmental impact of the products they produce," said Jack Johnson.

"We can all start today by making personal commitments to reduce plastic waste by carrying reusable shopping bags and water bottles, saying no to straws and choosing products without microbeads and plastic packaging. We can also support the efforts of the emerging youth leaders around the world working for healthy and plastic free oceans."

Globally recognised brands are also joining the fight. DELL Computers yesterday unveiled a commercial-scale supply chain using plastic which has been fished out of the sea near Haiti. The computer giant will use the recovered ocean plastic in its product packaging.

"Our new supply chain brings us one step closer to UN Environment's vision of Clean Seas by proving that [recycled](#) ocean plastic can be commercially re used," commented Dell's Vice President for Global Operations Piyush Bhargava.

### **Stemming the Tide**

All these actions will be crucial to stemming the tide of marine litter. Today, we are producing twenty times more plastic than in the 1960s. Around one third of all plastic is used for packaging. By 2050 our plastic production will have to grow three to four times to satisfy our demand. A large portion will end up in oceans where it will remain for centuries.

Actor Adrian Grenier, known for his role in hit TV show and film Entourage, and founder of Lonely Whale Foundation has joined the #CleanSeas campaign, asking people to re-think their daily choices.

"Whether we choose to use plastic bags at the grocery store or sip through a plastic straw, our seemingly small daily decisions to use plastics are having a dramatic effect on our oceans," said Adrian Grenier. "We have the power to effect change.

"Today I take this public pledge to do my part to refuse single use plastics, starting with the plastic straw, and also reaffirm my commitment to work with leaders such as Dell to reduce plastic packaging. If we start with one small change and hold each another accountable, I believe that together we can inspire global action for the health of our oceans."

[UNEP](#) added that we can expect major announcements during The Ocean Conference in New York at the UN Headquarters 5 – 9 June, and the December UN Environment Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya.

### **Read More**

[VIDEO: Plastic Oceans Adventure Documentary Trailer](#)

The team behind a feature length adventure documentary film which exposes the toll being taken on the marine environment by the huge quantities of waste plastics entering the oceans every year, has released a trailer.

[Report: Oceans to Contain More Waste Plastic than Fish by 2050](#)

There will be more plastic by weight in the ocean than fish by 2050, a new report from the World Economic Forum and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation has warned today.

[First-of-Kind Study into 20 Different Waste Streams Entering the Oceans](#)

A study looking at the impact of 20 different waste streams on marine life has been published by Washington D.C. based non-profit environmental advocacy group, Ocean Conservancy and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization.