

## End Plastic Soup: A Rotarian initiative to stop plastic pollution worldwide

It is no secret that climate change is **the greatest environmental threat of our time**.

But did you know that there is even a bigger environmental threat? The plastic pollution!

The consumption of single use plastic started in the 1950s. Plastic bags were used for shopping, because you could use them more often than paper bags. Now plastics are ubiquitous, and its waste is found everywhere: in our oceans, lakes, rivers, terrestrial environments and even in remote locations such as the Arctic and Antarctic. Plastic in nature breaks down into millions of tiny plastic particles, but never fully disappears.

These micro and nano plastics are everywhere, contaminating every ecosystem, community, and species and are found in our food chains, blood, organs and even breast milk affecting our health.

Two billion people around the world have no safe way to dispose of rubbish, meaning many are forced to dump or burn their plastic waste. Not only does burning plastic waste release greenhouse gases, increasing the climate crisis, but it also releases toxic fumes that are deadly for people's health.

Not only the process of making plastics releases harmful greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. At all stages of its degradation at sea, plastic emits greenhouse gases: from its photodegradation where, heated by the sun, it produces ethylene and above all methane (a gas 21 times more powerful than carbon dioxide, to its metabolization by micro-organisms, which can convert some of the carbon contained in micro- and nano-plastics.

Historically, the ocean has sequestered 30-50% of carbon dioxide emissions from human-related activities. However, evidence suggests that plankton are ingesting ever-greater quantities of microplastics and therefor absorb less carbon dioxide.

Plastics also have serious impacts on people and their rights. Quite many human rights impacts and outright violations are identified throughout the life cycle of plastics. These impacts include toxic pollution released in manufacturing, exposure to toxic additives in plastic consumer products, waste mismanagement, disinformation campaigns about the risks of and solutions to plastic pollution, and more. Meanwhile, the social and environmental cost of plastics is unevenly distributed around the globe and among social groups. Vulnerable groups, such as children, poorer communities, and workers in the informal sector are disproportionately impacted. For some of them waste dumps are the only place, where they can live for free. The toxic chemicals in plastic can not only impede physical health, but they can also put vulnerable populations at a higher risk for mental illness.

EndPlasticSoup was founded 2018 by the Rotary Clubs of Amsterdam. The goal is to stop the global plastic pollution before the year 2050. Meanwhile hundreds of Rotary, Rotaract and Interact clubs worldwide are supporting this Rotarian initiative with actions, by creating awareness and building alliances.

EndPlasticSoup is a sister organization of ESRAG and works together with WASHRAG and the RAG Menstrual Health and Hygiene.

Trying to stop the plastic pollution, is working on all Rotary's areas of focus:

- **fighting disease (microplastics are toxic pollutants!);**
- **saving mothers and children;**
- **providing clean water;**
- **supporting (environmental) education;**
- **growing local economies;**
- **protecting the environment** preserving loss of biodiversity and reducing climate change;
- plastic justice is **promoting peace.**

This year's Rotary theme is "Create hope in the world". EndPlasticSoup wants to create hope for the world, for those, who suffer from plastic pollution: people, nature, climate, and wants to create the conditions for peace and a future worth living. EndPlasticSoup helps to start actions and find the right project partners.

Just like the Rotary Vision Statement, EndPlasticSoup sees a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change – across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves.

#### Region Directors EndPlasticSoup

- Oceania: Melanie Lewis, RC Rotary Social Impact Network, D9685, Sydney, Australia
- Western North America: Barbara McChesney, RC Windsor, D5130, California, USA
- Latin America: Anna Mier, RC Juárez Campestre, D4110, Ciudad Juárez, Mexico
- West Africa: Abdul Rashid Alhassan, Rotaract Tamale, D9104, Tamale, Ghana
- Egypt & Middle East: Amin Sabri, RC Al Shorouk, D2451, Cairo, Egypt
- East Africa: Geoffrey Arinaitwe, Rotaract Muteesa 1 Royal University Kirumba, D9214, Masaka, Uganda
- Turkey: Reha Akin, RC Bursa-Nilüfer, D2440, Bursa, Turkey.

#### Theme Directors EndPlasticSoup

- Health: Ralf Thiel, RC Wiesbaden-Rheingau, D1820, Wiensbaden, Germany
- Oceans: Gesine Meissner, RC Passport Horizon D1850, D1850, Germany
- UN Plastic Treaty: Janet Kababeri-Macharia, RC Karura, D9212, Nairobi, Kenya
- Rotaract: Ilya Shcharbitski, Rotaract Schevingen, D1600, Scheveningen, Netherlands.

#### Leaders EndPlasticSoup

- International Convention Singapore 2024: Melanie Lewis and Barbara McChesney
- Rotaract Cleanup & Riverday Action 2023: Mohamad Elmiski , Rotaract Dubai and Ilya Shcharbitski, Rotaract Scheveningen.



The Executive Board of the Rotary Inter-Country Committees (ICC) and Rotary EndPlasticSoup signed a Memorandum of Understanding to mobilize a large network of Rotary actors. This will open the avenue for a worldwide cooperation to “end plastic soup” and for joint actions to raise awareness among young people and adults about the problem of single-use plastics. The MoU will allow to define joint projects, which can eventually be submitted for District Grants and Global Grants.

Andreas Strub (current President RC Bruxelles Amitié) and Azelio Fulmini (Past President RC Bruxelles Amitié and Chair of the ICC National Section Belgium, GD Luxembourg / Italy, Malta, San Marino) are EndPlasticSoup Ambassadors and the engine behind the collaboration with ICCs.

More information about EndPlasticSoup: [www.endplasticsoup.org](http://www.endplasticsoup.org) and the Inter-Country Committees (ICCs or CIP Comité Inter Pays): <https://rotary-icc.org/about-cip>



*Signing MoU ICC Executive Council and EndPlasticSoup - London - February 9, 2024*

*From left: Nathalie Huyghebaert (2024/2026 Chairman Elect of the ICC Executive Board), Marja Ritterfeld (Past DG D1850 and EndPlasticSoup International Board), Rotary International President Gordon R. McInally, Mohamed Ghammam (2022-2024 Chairman of the ICC Executive Board), Azelio Fulmini and Andreas Strub standing in the middle at the back. Gert-Jan van Dommelen (EndPlasticSoup International Board) is missing on the picture.*