



From plastic waste to circular solutions in South-East Asia

Side Event: 13th Asia-Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development

27 February 2025, 10:30-12:00 GMT+7

Meeting Room H, United Nations Conference Center, Bangkok, Thailand

Organizers

Chulalongkorn University, ESCAP Subregional Office for South-East Asia, UNEP Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asian (COBSEA), UN-Habitat

Background

Plastic waste remains one of the most pressing environmental challenges in the Asia-Pacific region, with particularly severe impacts on coastal and island communities. Beyond environmental degradation, mismanaged plastic waste undermines public health, livelihoods, gender equality and human dignity. At the same time, the region has seen growing momentum around circular economy approaches, social innovation and data-driven policy tools that can turn waste challenges into opportunities for inclusive and sustainable development.

This side event brings together two complementary perspectives. First, it highlights social innovation approaches that link plastic waste reduction with tangible social benefits, such as improved access to essential goods, livelihood creation and community empowerment. Second, it showcases how harmonised regional monitoring of plastics and marine litter, alongside city-level tools and circular economy frameworks, can translate data into actionable policies and investments.

Objectives

The event highlights inclusive approaches combining waste reduction with social impact, showcases CareVend as a practical case, examines how regional monitoring and city-level tools support municipalities, and facilitates cross-sector dialogue on policy barriers and enabling conditions.

Expected Outcomes

Actionable policy recommendations, identification of partnership opportunities, and contributions to VNR processes through data-driven and community-led solutions.



Provisional Programme	
8:30	Registration at UNCC, Bangkok, Thailand
9:00 - 10:00	UNCC Guided Tour by UN ESCAP
10:30 - 10:37	Opening remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD, Chulalongkorn University • Mr. Mahesh Pradhan, Regional Environmental Affairs Officer, UNEP COBSEA
10:37 - 10:50	Regional monitoring and city tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>City level & participative approach:</i> Miss Sandy Kumar, UN-Habitat • <i>Regional monitoring and Harmonization of data:</i> Miss Ana Maria Kumarasamy, UNEP COBSEA
10:50 - 10:55	Showcase Showcasing <i>CareVend</i> as a case study: Demonstrating how plastic waste can be exchanged for essential products and upcycled into new goods that support both environmental and social goals. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Ananya Varshney, Nanyang Technological University • Mr. Kanchanabhadra Sai-Sook, Chulalongkorn University • Mr. Liu Quangao, University of Chinese Academy of Sciences • Mr. Thayananth A/L Kumaresan, Universiti Malaya • Ms. Zhi Ying Tan, National University of Singapore
10:55 - 11:25	Interactive panel discussion Moderator: ESCAP Panelists <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Wassana Jangprajak, Environmental Officer at Pollution Control Department • Mr. Harsha Reddy, Vice President & Global Head of Sustainability Development, Indorama Ventures • TBD, Chulalongkorn University • Prof. Thammarat Koottatep, Environmental Engineering and Management, Faculty of Infrastructure, Global Water and Sanitation Center, Asian Institute of Technology
11:25 - 11:30	Closing remarks (5 min) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. Dr. Thomas Schneider, Chief Executive Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU) • Mr. Ruhimat Soerakoesoemah, Head, Subregional Office for South-East Asia, UNESCAP
11:30 - 12:00	Networking and Lunch break

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