

# Greenpeace to visit embassies to warn vs world's biggest plastic polluters of oceans

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DAVAO CITY—The global environmentalist organization Greenpeace on Tuesday plans to go around the embassies of the world's five leading plastic polluters of oceans to warn their governments to act on the companies' massive littering of the environment.

The Greenpeace Southeast Asia-Philippines announced on Sunday they would visit the embassies of Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam and the Philippines on April 25 to appeal to their ambassadors to call on their governments to act on the wanton throwing of plastics that end up in the oceans.

The group said it was doing the activity "on the urgency of the plastics pollution problem in the region and with the upcoming Asean Summit commencing in Manila".

"Greenpeace Southeast Asia is bringing its message to the Asean community by delivering a letter of appeal by a giant animated Plastic Bag Man and Woman to the respective embassies of Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam, and to the Philippines's Department of Foreign Affairs," it said.

"The rate of plastics being dumped in the oceans annually is alarming, with the five member-states of the Asean being named among the biggest sources of plastics pollution in the world's oceans," Greenpeace said.

It cited a study conducted by the British-registered charity organization Ellen Macarthur Foundation, which projected the volume of plastics in the ocean to outweigh fish stocks by the year 2050.

"Every year 8 million metric tons of plastic currently arrive in our oceans equivalent to five grocery bags filled with plastic for every foot of coastline in the world," the group said.

A 2014 posting at the Internet web site of National Geographic Society described the convergence of waste flotsam in the Pacific Ocean as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch or the Pacific Trash Vortex.

"The Great Pacific Garbage Patch, also known as the Pacific Trash Vortex, spans waters from the West Coast of North America to Japan. The patch is actually comprised of the Western Garbage Patch, located near Japan, and the Eastern Garbage Patch, located between the US states of Hawaii and California," it said, adding the other oceans have developed their own trash vortexes.

The size of the garbage in the Pacific has not been estimated yet, as scattered reports said it could be not less than 270,000 square kilometers, or the size of one state in the US, or even as big as the entire US itself.

Earlier in February this year, Greenpeace and its allied environmentalist groups in the country warned on the proposed adaptation by the Philippines of reducing plastic wastes through a method called gasification.

Greenpeace said the technology would subject the plastic waste to high heat “in a starved-oxygen environment [and] it is classified as a form of incineration by the European Union and the US Environmental Protection Agency.”

It said incineration has been banned in the Philippines since 1999.

“Environmental groups in the Philippines warn proposed plastics investment strategies disguised as solutions to marine plastic pollution will only be costly, ineffective and contribute further to environmental degradation while taking away from real solutions,” Greenpeace said.

Greenpeace and the other the other groups “sent their warning in response to two recent reports suggesting that a technology called gasification is a solution to eliminating low-value plastics like sachets and plastic bags, which are the most common plastic waste leaking into oceans.”

Greenpeace warned gasification “is one of the most expensive options to treat waste. In the United Kingdom, multiple companies have gone bankrupt while attempting to construct gasification facilities.”

“Plastic-waste burning, especially through dirty and expensive technologies such as pyrolysis or gasification, or the so-called ‘waste-to-energy’ (WtE) technologies, is a false response to the environmental crisis caused by plastics getting into our oceans and seas. This only perpetuates the plastic and chemical industries’ business-as-usual approach and diverts us from the real problem — that there is too much plastic production and consumption,” Greenpeace quoted Froilan Grate, executive director of the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA) Philippines, as saying.

Grate said waste burning “undermines communities’ efforts to intensify waste reduction and recycling programs. Since WtEs are extremely expensive to build and maintain, using them will force cities to produce more municipal waste. Instead of reducing global plastic production, WtE will encourage more production of low-value plastic products.”