

Global innovation challenge is open for students to fight marine plastic

- UN Environment and Think Beyond Plastic launch worldwide innovation challenge for university students to fight plastic in oceans
- Winners to attend the Sixth International Marine Debris Conference in San Diego, California and receive free mentorship to help them develop their ideas

Entries are open for the world's first student competition to find the next generation of solutions to the global problem of marine litter. Organized by UN Environment and Think Beyond Plastic, the Marine Plastics Innovation Challenge invites university students worldwide to submit fresh ideas in the fields of engineering, communications, economics and data modelling.

Each year, 8 million tonnes of plastic end up in the oceans: the equivalent of a full garbage truck every minute. This pollution threatens the survival of fish and other sea creatures, destroys marine and coastal ecosystems that support over three billion people worldwide, and endangers human health by entering the food chain. If no action is taken, by 2050 there could be more plastic than fish in the oceans.

Deadline for entries is 20 November 2017. To participate, students need to be enrolled in university as of June 2017, be supported by a faculty member, and submit an entry in one or more of the following categories:

1. *Engineering and Design*: including innovations in materials, manufacturing processes, packaging design and related fields that result in a measurable reduction in marine plastic.
2. *Communication*: including multimedia products, mobile apps, and innovative storytelling that raise awareness and inspire public action against marine plastics.
3. *Economics*: including innovative methodologies to assess the economic impact of plastic pollution and/or develop new financial and business models to address market failures.
4. *Prediction and Recovery*: including the development of analytical tools (algorithms, models, hotspot identification) to better capture and monitor data about plastic pollution and propose solutions.

One winner in each category will be announced at the Sixth International Marine Debris Conference in San Diego, California, which will run from March 12 to 16, 2018. Winners will have the chance to present their ideas at the conference and gain entry into the Think Beyond Plastic annual acceleration program, which provides mentoring and bridge to commercialization for winning ideas.

For instructions on how to enter and judging criteria:

www.cleanseas.org/marine-challenge

About UN Environment

UN Environment is the leading global voice on the environment. It provides leadership and encourages partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations. UN Environment works with governments, the private sector, civil society and with other UN entities and international organizations across the world.

About Think Beyond Plastic™

Think Beyond Plastic is an innovation accelerator focused on eliminating plastic pollution and advancing the transition towards bio-benign materials from renewable sources and associated manufacturing processes, innovative products and packaging design. It identifies early stage innovations, develops bridge to commercialization for qualified startups in all stages, and cultivates the investor network. Participants in its annual accelerator cohort benefit from a rich program incorporating business modeling, customer discovery, product development, go-to-market strategy, financial planning, identifying and managing strategic partnerships. For more information visit ThinkBeyondPlastic.com