Single-use Plastics in Asia & Europe

28 October 2020 | by Nur A’in A RAZAK, Asia-Europe Foundation

Overview:

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3. Policies & Trends
4. Challenges
Introduction to SUP
Definition & Scale of Issue

Single-use plastics are plastic products that are intended or designed to be used only once.

Packaging takes up the largest share of global plastic production and waste generated.

12 billion tons of plastic litter in landfills and natural environment by 2050.

Source: Geyer et al., 2017
Introduction to SUP

Impacts

Environmental
- SEA & OCEAN
- AIR, LAND & WATER
- GHGs

Social
- VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES
- HAZARDOUS ADDITIVES

Economic
- MATERIAL VALUE
- NEGATIVE EXTERNALITIES

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SUP in Asia & Europe
Production & Consumption Patterns

Asian ASEM countries

- >50% global plastic production
- ~8% of global plastic waste generated /day (per capita)

Top importers of plastic waste & scraps

European ASEM countries

- <20% global plastic production
- ~15% of global plastic waste generated /day (per capita)

Top exporters of plastic waste & scraps

European ASEM countries exported ~4.6 MMT in 2018 (Asian counterparts 2.2 MMT)

Sources: Statista, 2020; Jambeck et al. 2015; & UN Comtrade 2020
SUP in Asia & Europe

Policies & Trends

Asian ASEM countries
• 11 out of 21 have existing or approved national/sub-national policies on SUP (as of 2018)

European ASEM countries
• 22 out of 30 have existing or approved national/sub-national policies on SUP (as of 2018)
  o # expected to increase due to the 2015 & 2019 EU Directive on SUP

Policies
• Increase in social awareness & public pressure
• Increase in local civil society initiatives & movements
• Rise in more sustainable local businesses
• Voluntary actions by businesses

Trends
• Increase in policies/initiatives to reduce consumption and improve recycling
• Increased rate of recycling
• Rise in product/material innovation and use of technology
• Higher impact/wider reach of initiatives & movements

Source: UNEP, 2018

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Main challenges

1. Economic growth outpaces waste management
2. Narrow policies & initiatives
3. Wastes exported into lower income countries
4. Lack of data
5. Requires behavioural change
6. High complexity

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Thank you!