



East Asian oceans filling with rubbish: Clean Up the World campaign targets action on plastic

Bangkok/Sydney, 18 September 2008 - The world's oceans are filling up with rubbish and with more than 13,000 pieces of plastic already in every square kilometre of ocean urgent action is needed to prevent a dramatic increase in the next decade, the founder of the global Clean Up the World campaign Ian Kiernan AO* said today.

Speaking in the lead up to the Clean Up the World Weekend 19-21 September, Mr Kiernan also warned of a likely increase in the numbers of marine life killed or injured by marine debris unless industry and governments followed the lead of local communities taking practical steps to reduce waste and recycle.

"Plastic accounts for up to 90 per cent of all marine rubbish and is responsible for the deaths of more than a million seabirds and over 100,000 marine mammals such as whales, dolphins and seals every year," he said.

"People working together in their local communities are making a difference, but they can't do it on their own. Things will only get worse in the next decade unless the shipping industry and governments join forces with communities to prevent the estimated 5 million pieces of rubbish thrown overboard every day at sea."

Mr Kiernan began the Clean Up the World campaign 16 years ago with the support of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) after seeing large amounts of ocean rubbish during a solo round-the-world yacht race.

"The oceans and seas surrounding East Asia are home to some of the richest marine biodiversity in the world. What is frightening is that they are also now some of the largest concentrations of marine rubbish."

"East Asia is the most populous region of the world and most people live on the coast where marine rubbish is often generated. The first Clean Up East Asian Sea Campaign this year is targeting marine rubbish around the region."

Many activities on the Clean Up the World Weekend will be targeting marine debris including UNEP's Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) who is conducting its first Clean Up East Asian Seas Campaign in 2008.

Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP, praised the efforts of organisations across the world involved in the Clean Up the World campaign.

"If we can better manage marine litter, by becoming more resource efficient then perhaps we can also act on the wider wastes that not only pollute our seas but our rivers, lands and our common atmosphere. The evolving activities of Clean Up the World offer an excellent avenue and opportunity for everyone to get involved," he said.

* AO Order of Australia awarded for distinguished service of a high degree to Australia or to humanity at large.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Ms Alana Mew, Communications Officer, Clean Up the World/Essential Media, Tel: +612 8280 9100 or +614 23 377 567, Email: Alana@essentialmedia.com.au

Ms. Satwant Kaur, Regional Information Officer, UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Tel: 02 2882127, Mobile: 0839086000, Email: kaur@un.org

Clean Up the World is a campaign held in conjunction with our Primary Partner UNEP. Sponsors – Brambles and Qantas. Technology Partner – Google. Global Media Partner – National Geographic Channels International. Supporters – The Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Amor and Marriott International.