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NEW  
PLASTICS  
ECONOMY

Global  
Commitment

# NEW PLASTICS ECONOMY INITIATIVE PARTNERS

## Lead Philanthropic partner



## Philanthropic partners



## Core partners



# FOREWORD

People around the world are coming together to demand change in the way we make and use plastics. Millions of dollars are being invested in cleaning up our oceans, rivers and beaches in an effort to turn the tide on plastic pollution. These efforts are vital, but will be for nothing if ever more plastic continues to be allowed to escape into our environment — or indeed be landfilled or burned. We need to tackle the issue at source, and this is what the Global Commitment aims to do.

Launched in October 2018 by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation in collaboration with the UN Environment Programme, the Global Commitment unites businesses, governments, and other organisations from around the world behind a common vision of a circular economy for plastics, in which plastics never become waste. The signatory group now exceeds 400 organisations. They are working to: eliminate the plastic items we don't need; innovate so all plastics we do need are designed to be safely reused, recycled, or composted; and circulate everything we use to keep it in the economy and out of the environment. All business and government signatories have set concrete, public 2025 targets towards this vision, and we applaud them for their leadership.

One year on from the Global Commitment's launch, we are pleased to present this progress report. It is the first in a series of annual reports in which we aim to assess progress across the signatory group as a whole, highlight leading examples that can serve as inspiration for others, and disclose the progress of individual companies and governments towards a circular economy for plastics.

The 2019 report shows promising progress on two fronts. First, many business and government signatories are laying the foundations to scale and accelerate action and have made initial progress against their targets — ranging from concrete plans to eliminate problematic packaging items, to 43 businesses reporting active reuse pilots, changes in packaging design to increase recyclability and initial progress towards ambitious recycled content targets. Second, the report establishes, for the first time, a quantitative baseline that can be used to measure such progress across a significant group of businesses over the period to 2025. These are important steps forward.

To reach the 2025 targets, continued scaling of action and a further increase in the ambition level will be needed. In particular, this applies to efforts going beyond recycling, such as elimination and reuse. This will need to happen in the short term, as major investments, innovations, and transformation programmes must start now in order to have an impact by 2025.

To make the vision of a circular economy for plastic a reality, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and UN Environment Programme call on all businesses that make or use plastics, and all governments across the world, to sign up to the Global Commitment and join the effort to create a circular economy for plastic.

The question is not whether a world without plastic pollution is possible, but what we will do together to make it happen.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Andrew Morlet'.

**Andrew Morlet**  
CEO, Ellen MacArthur Foundation

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Inger Andersen'.

**Inger Andersen**  
Executive Director, UN Environment Programme

## DISCLAIMER

This report has been compiled by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, with input from the UN Environment Programme in relation to the government signatories. Part 1 has been written and compiled by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, with input from the UN Environment Programme. The content of the individual signatory progress reports in Part 2 has been provided by the respective signatories.

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Where a signatory has not provided its commitment information within the timeframes requested by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and/or the UN Environment Programme, its Individual Commitment page is not included. This version of the 2019 Progress Report was completed on October 18 2019. Business and government signatories that joined before the start of the reporting process on June 1, 2019 have been asked to report on progress, companies and governments that joined later will be asked to report on progress for the first time in 2020.

If you are a signatory and you believe there has been an error in the reproduction of the information provided to us by your organisation, please contact us as soon as possible at [reportingGC@ellenmacarthurfoundation.org](mailto:reportingGC@ellenmacarthurfoundation.org), or your contact at the UN Environment Programme, so that we can update our records.



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# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

More information on all definitions used as part of commitments made by signatories can be found [here](#).

## GENERAL TERMS

### The New Plastics Economy

A global initiative with the ambition to set the economy on an irreversible path towards a world where plastics never become waste, starting with packaging. Led by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, it applies the principles of the circular economy and brings together key stakeholders to rethink and redesign the future of plastics. More information can be found [here](#).

### The common vision

The vision of a circular economy for plastics, where plastic never becomes waste, endorsed by all 400+ signatories of the New Plastics Economy Global Commitment. It can be read in full on page 8 of this document.

### Signatory

An organisation (business, government, NGO, academic institution or other organisation) or relevant individual (for example, academics in relevant fields) that has signed the Global Commitment. More information on the signatory group is provided in Section 2, and a full list of current signatories can be found in the appendix of this document.

### Plastics Pact

A network of initiatives around the world that bring together all key stakeholders at the national or regional level to implement solutions towards a circular economy for plastics. Each initiative is led by a local organisation and unites governments, businesses, and citizens behind the common vision with a concrete set of ambitious local targets. More information can be found [here](#).

## TYPES OF PLASTIC CONTENT

### Virgin plastic

Plastics that have not been previously used or subjected to processing other than for their original production. In other words, plastic that is not produced from post-consumer (see next definition) or pre-consumer recycled material.

### Post-consumer recycled content

Proportion, by mass, of post-consumer recycled material in a product or packaging. Post-consumer material is that generated by households or by commercial, industrial and institutional facilities in their role as end users of the product, where that material can no longer be used for its intended purpose. This includes returns of material from the distribution chain, but it excludes pre-consumer material (e.g. production scrap), as defined by ISO 14021.

### Renewable content

Proportion, by mass, of renewable material in a product or packaging. Renewable material is that composed of biomass from a living source and that can be continually replenished. When claims of renewability are made for virgin materials, those materials shall come from sources that are replenished at a rate equal to or greater than the rate of depletion, as defined by ISO 14021.

## ASSESSMENT OF PLASTIC PACKAGING IN THE GLOBAL COMMITMENT

### Problematic and unnecessary plastic packaging

The following list of criteria is provided to signatories to help identify problematic or unnecessary plastic packaging or plastic packaging components:

1. It is not reusable, recyclable or compostable (as per the definitions below).
2. It contains, or its manufacturing requires, hazardous chemicals that pose a significant risk to human health or the environment (applying the precautionary principle).
3. It can be avoided (or replaced by a reuse model) while maintaining utility.
4. It hinders or disrupts the recyclability or compostability of other items.
5. It has a high likelihood of being littered or ending up in the natural environment.

### Reusable packaging

Packaging which has been designed to accomplish or proves its ability to accomplish a minimum number of trips or rotations in a system for reuse. A system for reuse defined as established arrangements (organisational, technical or financial) which ensure the possibility of reuse, in closed-loop, open-loop or in a hybrid system, as defined in ISO 18603:2013.

A framework to understand reuse models, and 69 examples of reuse in action can be found in the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's [REUSE book](#).

### Recyclable packaging

Packaging or a packaging component is recyclable if its successful post-consumer collection, sorting, and recycling is proven to work in practice and at scale. The threshold suggested to prove recycling works 'in practice and at scale' is a 30% post-consumer recycling rate achieved across multiple regions, collectively representing at least 400 million inhabitants. More information on the assessment of recyclability under the Global Commitment is provided in Section 3.3.

### Compostable packaging

Packaging or a packaging component is compostable if it is in compliance with relevant international compostability standards and if its successful post-consumer collection, sorting, and composting is proven to work in practice and at scale. The threshold suggested to prove composting works 'in practice and at scale' is a 30% composting rate achieved across multiple regions, collectively representing at least 400 million inhabitants. More information on assessment of compostability under the Global Commitment is provided in Section 3.3.

## OTHER TERMS

### Deposit return schemes

Used to encourage consumers to return packaging for reuse or recycling through provision of a financial incentive. The schemes involve the cost of a deposit being added to the price of products, with the deposit redeemable when consumers return the empty packaging to a designated return point.

### Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)

A policy approach under which producers are required to take a financial and/or physical responsibility for the treatment or disposal of products after their use by consumers.

### Recycling (chemical or mechanical)

ISO 18604:2 defines material recycling as: "Reprocessing, by means of a manufacturing process, of a used packaging material into a product, a component incorporated into a product, or a secondary (recycled) raw material; excluding energy recovery and the use of the product as a fuel." This includes both mechanical (maintaining polymer structure) and chemical (breaking down polymer structure into more basic building blocks, for example via chemical or enzymatic processes, that are then built up again into new materials) recycling processes. It explicitly excludes technologies that do not reprocess materials back into materials but instead into fuels or energy.

# THE NEW PLASTICS ECONOMY VISION

Signatories of the New Plastics Economy Global Commitment endorse the common vision of a circular economy for plastic, where plastic never becomes waste. They recognise it offers a root cause solution to plastic pollution with profound economic, environmental and societal benefits. Signatories recognise this vision is the target state we seek over time, acknowledge that it will require significant effort and investment; and recognise the importance of taking a full life-cycle and systems perspective, aiming for better economic and environmental outcomes overall. Above all, they recognise the time to act is now. For plastic packaging specifically, signatories recognise a circular economy is defined by six characteristics:

1

**Elimination of problematic or unnecessary plastic packaging through redesign, innovation, and new delivery models is a priority**

Plastics bring many benefits. At the same time, there are some problematic items on the market that need to be eliminated to achieve a circular economy, and, sometimes, plastic packaging can be avoided altogether while maintaining utility.

2

**Reuse models are applied where relevant, reducing the need for single-use packaging**

While improving recycling is crucial, we cannot recycle our way out of the plastics issues we currently face.

Wherever relevant, reuse business models should be explored as a preferred option, reducing the need for single-use plastic packaging.

3

**All plastic packaging is 100% reusable, recyclable, or compostable by design**

This requires a combination of redesign and innovation in business models, materials, packaging design, and reprocessing technologies.

Compostable plastic packaging is not a blanket solution, but rather one for specific, targeted applications.

4

**All plastic packaging is reused, recycled or composted in practice**

No plastics should end up in the environment. Landfill, incineration, and waste-to-energy are not

5

**The use of plastic is fully decoupled from the consumption of finite resources**

This decoupling should happen first and foremost through reducing the use of virgin plastics (by way of

6

**All plastic packaging is free of hazardous chemicals, and the health, safety, and rights of all people involved are respected**

The use of hazardous chemicals in packaging and its manufacturing and recycling processes should be

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