

| |
|-------------|
| 8 June 2021 |
|-------------|

| |
|---------------|
| Press Release |
|---------------|

IGES Contributes to the Development of an Online Course “Cities and Marine Pollution: Building a Circular Economy”

Today, in commemoration of World Oceans Day, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) launched its eLearning course on “Cities and Marine Plastic Pollution: Building a Circular Economy”. The Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) has been contributing to the module development of the course.

Of the top ten rivers around the world with the worst plastic pollution, eight are located in Asia. Furthermore, nearly 60% of global plastic pollution is said to originate from ASEAN cities, which, despite showing remarkable economic growth, have underdeveloped waste management systems. To prevent marine plastic pollution, it is essential to implement city-led approaches and strategic actions that fill the gaps in these systems.

IGES and UNESCAP signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in April 2016, and since then, the two organisations have been capitalising on their strengths to cooperate on environmental issues and sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific. From April 2020, as a partner agency of UNESCAP for the Japanese government’s Closing the Loop project, IGES has been making use of the latest digital technology to formulate action plans on limiting the leakage of plastic waste into the ocean and reducing marine plastic pollution in four target cities in Viet Nam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand.

As part of this collaborative effort, the learning programme offers practical analyses of technical issues relevant to plastic waste management in cities, emphasising solutions and actions. Entirely free of charge, the course flexibly caters to the interests and experiences of learners, who may include rural local government officials participating in international cooperation initiatives, students interested in waste management in developing countries, and global citizens hoping to leave beautiful oceans behind for the next generation.

IGES Executive Director Yasuo Takahashi commented, “Plastic pollution and marine litter are complex and cross-cutting issues for which there is no single solution. What is really necessary are strong and concerted actions by stakeholders at all levels, from global to local. National

and local governments must also be equipped with scientific knowledge and the capacity to take impactful action. I am very pleased that IGES was able to work with UNESCAP and other partners to develop this eLearning course, which will offer solutions applicable to countries and cities across the ASEAN region."

Dr. Stefanos Fotiou, UNESCAP Director of Environment and Development Division, stated, "The ASEAN region is in the spotlight when it comes to marine litter prevention. There are solutions, but we are running out of time and must work together if we are to protect our oceans and meet the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We see that local governments have the passion and drive to rise to this challenge. ESCAP's goal with this knowledge-building tool is to train on the best available technologies and practices so that science-based strategies can be implemented, and the region can achieve plastic-free waterways before it's too late."

Likewise, Mr. Kazuya Nashida, Ambassador of Japan in Thailand said, "Plastic marine litter is one of today's most serious emerging issues and without any countermeasures, the amount of plastic waste in the ocean will outweigh fish by 2050, posing a threat to the environment and our way of life. It is said that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased pollution from disposable products, such as plastic face masks and hand sanitizer bottles. To counteract this, we must work together to identify sources and pathways to reduce the environmental impact of plastic waste."

Please register for the eLearning course using the link below.

<https://sdghelpdesk-elearning.unescap.org/thematicarea/detail?id=24>

About the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES)

The Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) is a collaborative research and outreach organisation working to accelerate the transition to a sustainable, resilient, shared and inclusive Asia-Pacific region, both across borders and within the world at large. Our strategic research and operations are defined by a mission to drive action on the world's most critical environmental and social challenges through the delivery of trusted expertise on sustainable development and resilience. IGES operates as an agent of change and together with key international organisations, governments, academic institutes, business and civil society leaders, we seek to foster a world where planetary boundaries are fully respected, a green economy is flexibly implemented, and the well-being of people is steadily improved. In so doing we emphasise workable and inspired approaches to cross-cutting global development issues ranging from climate change, natural resources and ecosystems management, and sustainable consumption and production, among many others. The Institute was established in 1998 with support from the Japanese government and Kanagawa Prefecture and maintains its international headquarters in Hayama, Japan. With



offices and local centres in Tokyo, Kansai, Kitakyushu, Beijing, Bangkok and New Delhi, IGES supports a regional and global network for ground-breaking sustainable development research and practice.

<https://iges.or.jp/en>

For more information please contact:
Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES)
Kanae Sho or Rie Sugihara
Tel: +81-70-5596-5924
Email: iges_pr@iges.or.jp