

AMONG WORLD'S WORST POLLUTERS, ASEAN VOWS TO TACKLE OCEAN WASTE

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Pollution - Air, Water, Soil & E-waste

Activists in front of plastic and electronic waste outside Foreign Ministry in Bangkok, Thailand. | Photo Credit: [AP](#)

With Southeast Asia awash in rubbish, from plastic-choked whales to trash-clogged canals, leaders are planning to push through a deal to fight maritime debris at a regional meeting this weekend.

Just five Asian countries — China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Thailand — dump more than half of the eight million tonnes of plastic waste that end up in oceans every year, according to a 2017 Ocean Conservancy report. The region has come under fire for not doing enough to tackle its mounting trash troubles, with single-use plastic and sub-par waste management adding to the problem.

Leaders at a weekend meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are expected to sign a “Bangkok Declaration” on fighting maritime waste — a first of its kind — which promises to “prevent and significantly reduce marine debris,” according to a draft. But activists are worried the agreement doesn’t go far enough.

“If we are not reducing single-use plastic at the production process, this ‘Bangkok Declaration’... will not succeed,” said Tara Buakamsri of Greenpeace in Thailand.

The agreement also omits penalties for the worst offending companies or countries, and fails to specify measures to tackle the problem.

ASEAN summit host Thailand billed the forum as environmentally friendly, handing out recycled paper notebooks and tote bags and food containers made from reused plastic. But venue meetings in giant air-conditioned hotels and rows of plastic water bottles next to signs promoting “green meetings” had some wondering how dedicated the hosts really were. In addition to spewing out billions of tonnes of trash, these nations are among the world’s top importers of trash from developed countries like the U.S. and Canada.

Activists have urged countries to stop accepting rubbish, which can end up in landfills and waterways.

Alarming images of polluted canals in the Philippines, plastic-laden Vietnamese beaches, or whales, turtles choking on plastic debris have grabbed global headlines. Some private firms in Thailand and Vietnam have started replacing plastic products with recyclable materials, but government policies have yet to catch up.

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New find is bigger in size than one discovered in 2016, also in Arunachal Pradesh

The Nandankanan Zoological Park (NZP) has lost one of its beloved members — 41-year-old Orangutan, an extant species of great apes. According to NZP,

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