

Towards Plastic Circularity in Pakistan: Solutions and Way Forward

Panel Discussion

Plastics, renowned for their versatility and widespread use across various industries, have transformed our modern lifestyle. However, the escalating global plastic waste crisis has underscored the urgent need for change. According to the [United Nations Environment Program \(UNEP\)](#), plastic consumption is projected to double by 2040 compared to 2016, generating approximately 400 million tonnes of plastic waste annually. Shockingly, only a small fraction - 12% - is incinerated, and a mere 9% is recycled. The repercussions of plastic waste are alarming, including pollution, resource depletion, and severe environmental damage. It can take hundreds of years for a simple plastic bag to degrade, while a plastic bottle can persist for approximately 300 years. In the face of this environmental crisis, a paradigm shift towards a sustainable circular economy becomes imperative.

In South Asia, Pakistan takes the lead in terms of the highest percentage of mismanaged plastic waste with 3.3 million tonnes produced every year. In Pakistan, plastics accounts for almost [65% of the waste stream](#), which is being produced by individual consumers and households, retail and commercial sectors, industries, construction and building sectors. Also, plastic waste produced in Pakistan is equivalent to the height of [two K-2 mountains](#) as it can, if piled up in one place, go as high as 16,500 meters.

To address the urgency of the issue, UNEP's International Negotiating Committee (INC) convened its [second session](#) in June this year. The objective was to develop an internationally legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including marine environments, through stakeholder negotiations. This collaborative effort seeks to pave the way for effective global action in combatting plastic pollution and fostering a sustainable future.

Moreover, a circular economy approach, focused on recycling, reuse, redesign and waste reduction, offers a compelling solution to the plastic challenge. By reimagining our relationship with plastics and adopting a circular economy mindset, we can forge a path towards a more sustainable and resilient world, mitigating the adverse impacts of plastic waste and embracing a more sustainable future for generations to come.

In this context, SDPI in collaboration with the UNEP, is organising this *Panel Discussion* on achieving plastics circularity in Pakistan. The discussion will bring together key stakeholders from government bodies, industries, development partners and regional organisations to explore solutions for efficient plastic waste management. The panel will delve into the challenges faced in plastic waste management, such as inadequate infrastructure and low recycling rates, while examining the potential of innovative technologies and best practices from other countries. Additionally, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) will be explored as a pivotal mechanism to hold manufacturers accountable for their plastic waste and encourage sustainable product design. The importance of consumer awareness and behaviour change will also be highlighted, promoting responsible plastic usage and the adoption of eco-friendly alternatives. The panel aims to identify opportunities for collaboration between various stakeholders, including industry engagement and Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), to foster circularity and responsible plastic management practices. Furthermore, policy and regulatory frameworks will be discussed to assess their effectiveness and propose reforms that incentivise plastic circularity. The following key questions will be addressed by the panel:

1. What is the current state of plastic waste management in Pakistan, and what are the key challenges hindering effective plastic circularity in the country?

2. How can the concept of ‘plastic circularity’ be effectively integrated into existing waste management practices, and what are the potential benefits of transitioning to a circular economy model for plastics?
3. What are the successful circular economy models and best practices from other countries that can be adapted to suit Pakistan’s unique context?
4. How can Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) be implemented in Pakistan to incentivise manufacturers to take responsibility for the entire life cycle of their products and reduce plastic waste?
5. What role can the private sector play in promoting plastic circularity through sustainable packaging, responsible production, and innovative recycling technologies?
6. What are the key policy and regulatory challenges in plastic waste management, and what reforms are needed to create an enabling environment for plastic circularity?
7. What funding and investment mechanisms can support the implementation of plastic circularity initiatives in Pakistan?
8. What are the best practices in the region and how can Pakistan learn from them?

Panel Organiser

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