



The Global Plastics Summit: Working towards a robust UN Plastics Treaty

October 11th-12th 2023 | Bangkok



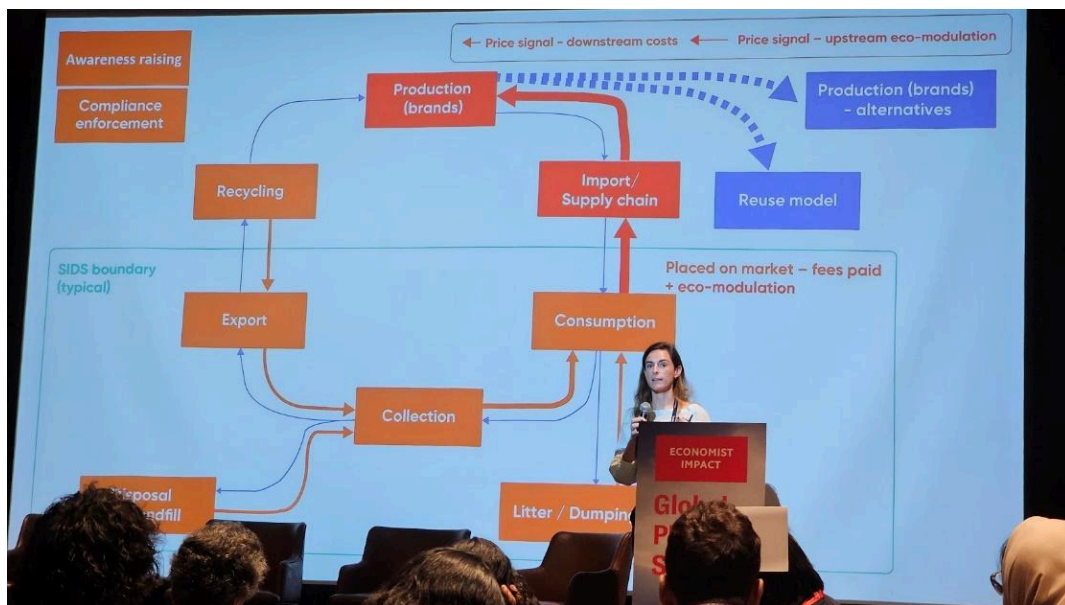
DOSI Representatives (L-R: Dr Shamik Dasgupta and Mr Rufino Varea) at the Global Plastics Summit.

Overview

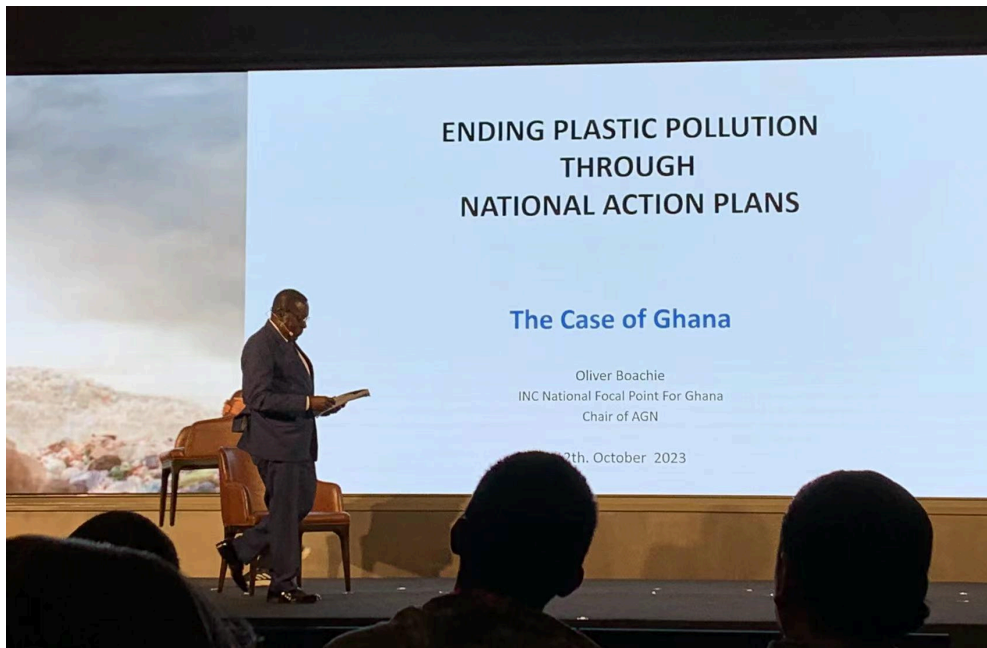
The Global Plastics Summit was organized by Economist Impact. It aimed to gather stakeholders to address plastic pollution and propose solutions. The summit discussed radical proposals, including reducing virgin resin production by 2040. Participants worked towards outlining a long-term progressive plastics treaty, emphasizing its significance in addressing health risks and chemicals of concern. The event gathered over 500 stakeholders, positioning it as a crucial precursor to the UN Plastics Treaty negotiations. The summit aimed to influence the Third Session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee meeting in November of 2023.

The outcomes of the Summit illustrate the commitment of stakeholders from various sectors to address plastic waste and pollution and promote a more sustainable approach to plastics. The key highlights and main outcomes of the Global Plastics Summit included:

- Recognition of the urgent need for a circular plastics economy and the unsustainability of the current linear model.
- Discussions on collaborative solutions, new business models, technologies, and policies to transition to a circular plastics system.
- Launch of a report with recommendations for achieving a 50% effective plastic collection rate in the UK by 2030, helping meet recycling targets.
- Calls for an internationally binding treaty to regulate plastic production, use, and disposal, establishing global standards and harmonized solutions.
- Commitments from some governments to support negotiation of a global plastics treaty.
- Pledges from local governments and corporations to cut overall plastic use and increase the use of recycled content in plastic packaging and products.
- Focus on developing waste management infrastructure in developing nations and advocating for Extended Producer Responsibility schemes.
- Emphasis on designing more recyclable or reusable plastic packaging and providing alternatives to single-use plastics.



Presentation proposing an extended producer responsibility model throughout the value chain (upstream-midstream-downstream) of plastic production and circulation.



Pledges and action plans of governments to end plastic pollution

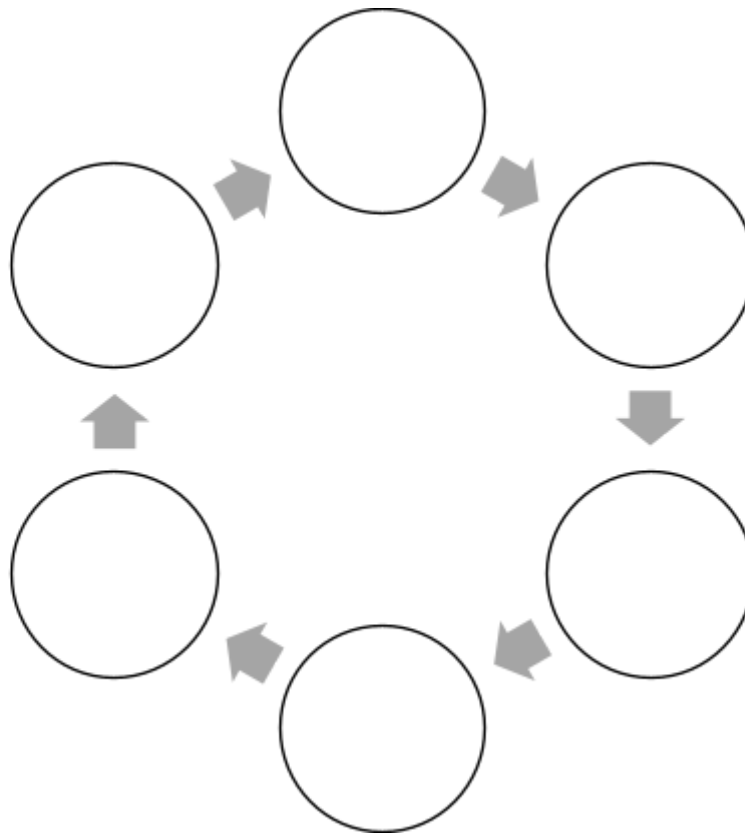
Participants:

Dr Shamik Dasgupta – Pollution and Marine Litter Working Group co-lead.

Mr Rufino Varea – Pollution and Marine Litter Working Group member.

DOSI Actions:

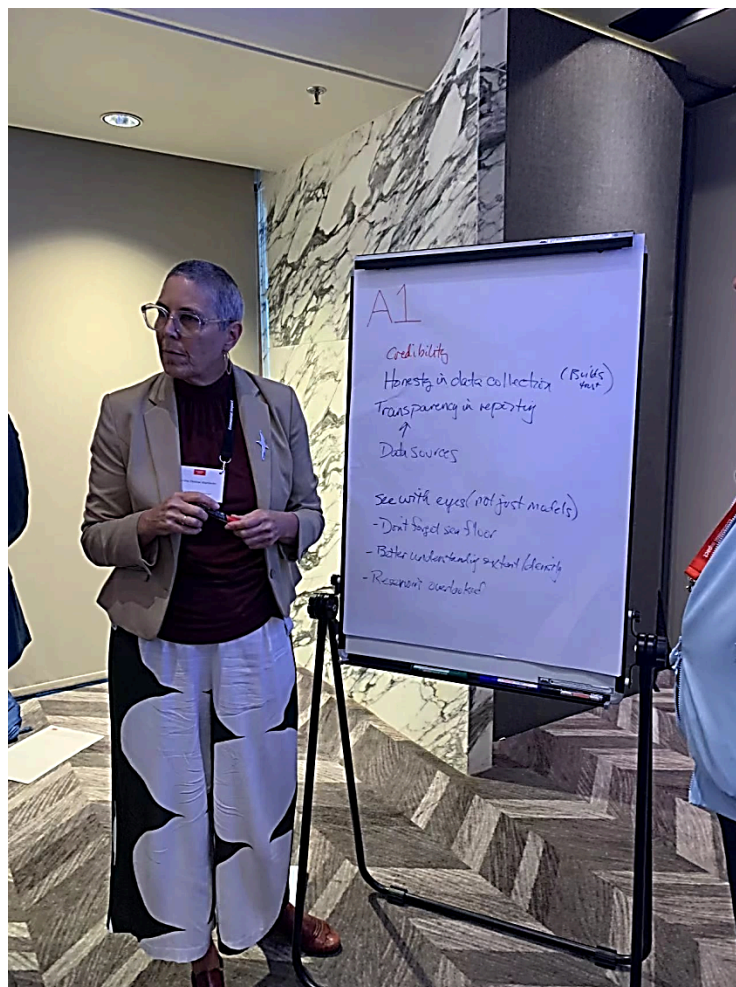
The discussions also focused on building partnerships between governments, NGOs, and corporations to share responsibility and accelerate solutions. The Global Plastics Summit provided a platform for diverse stakeholders to address challenges and opportunities related to sustainable plastics use, recovery, and innovation. Rufino met with the Vice-President of Palau, H.E J. Uduch Sengebau Senior to briefly discuss the persisting impacts of plastic pollution in Small Island States, particularly for the Pacific, and she expressed deep interest in keeping in touch with Researchers like DOSI members to ensure that the sciences are continuously heard and incorporated into discussions and high-level platforms. Rufino also met with the incoming chair for the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) to develop a legally binding instrument to address plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. Rufino shared with Ambassador Luis Vayas of Ecuador about the necessity of indigenous scientists and knowledge systems must be meaningfully involved, and that avenues and financial provisions and support mechanisms are maintained so that indigenous scientists are engaged and heard in negotiation spaces.



Overall, there were no specific outcomes from the Global Plastics Summit that covered the deep ocean. Nonetheless, its primary objective revolved around the participation of stakeholders from diverse sectors, such as businesses, health experts, scientists, NGOs, waste pickers, and policymakers. However, Shamik engaged with several delegates to introduce DOSI and our Pollution and Debris Working Group. He participated in two break-out sessions: 1. Harmonizing monitoring and assessment – at regional levels, increase data comparability and transparency, and track programs; 2. Policies for reuse and refill (mostly for SIDS). In the first break-out session, he advocated for including monitoring efforts in the deep seafloor, and highlighted the deep oceans should be included in science-based policies and be an integral part of the treaty.



Shamik (center) with other delegates during break-out session





“Deep seafloor/ocean” being listed as a key point to emphasize during monitoring efforts

While the preservation of the deep ocean stands as a pivotal consideration in tackling plastic pollution, the absence of tangible results and deliberations regarding this realm during the Summit unequivocally signifies a deficiency in scientific and policy attention dedicated to its cause. Hence, it is imperative for DOSI to persist in its commitment towards these vital areas, advocating for and emphasizing the scientific imperatives that warrant the engagement of stakeholders and world leaders in preserving the deep ocean, particularly in addressing the issue of plastic contamination.

We support the calls by other stakeholder participants at the Summit on the following specific key areas as necessary avenues for future engagements that can reinforce the work of all stakeholders in similar events to ensure a globally binding instrument that is fit for purpose in addressing plastic pollution:

Understanding plastic movement and its impacts: Scientific research efforts should focus on better understanding how plastic moves through the environment across land and sea, as well as the impacts of plastic pollution and microplastics on marine life and human health ¹.

Developing new solutions for recycling and waste management: Research and innovation are needed to develop efficient recycling technologies, promote circular economy approaches, and improve waste management systems ².

Circular plastics economy: Policy efforts under the global plastics treaty should promote a circular plastics economy, setting reduction targets for plastic production and use, and expanding extended producer responsibility programs ³.

International cooperation: The treaty development should prioritize improving international cooperation on waste management and recycling, including knowledge exchange, technology transfer, and capacity building, particularly from developed to developing countries ⁴.

Monitoring and data collection: Ongoing monitoring and research efforts are necessary to track trends in plastic pollution in the deep ocean over time and assess the effectiveness of policies and solutions ⁵.



In upcoming events such as the Global Plastics Summit, it is important to give importance to scientific and policy requirements and the issues related to the deep ocean and the development of the global plastics treaty. This prioritization will ensure a complete and efficient strategy for dealing with plastic pollution in the deep ocean and promoting the progress of the global plastics treaty.



References

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