

MARINE PLASTIC POLLUTION

- Over **400 million tons of plastic** are produced every year for use in a wide variety of applications.
- At least **14 million tons of plastic end up in the ocean every year**, and plastic makes up **80% of all marine debris** found from surface waters to deep-sea sediments.
- Marine species **ingest or are entangled by plastic debris**, which causes severe injuries and death.
- Plastic pollution **threatens food safety and quality, human health, coastal tourism, and contributes to climate change.**
- There is an urgent need to explore new and existing **legally binding agreements** to address marine plastic pollution.

What is the issue?

Plastic is a synthetic, organic polymer made from petroleum with properties ideally suited for a wide variety of applications including: packaging, building and construction, household and sports equipment, vehicles, electronics, and agriculture. Over **300 million tons of plastic are produced every year**, half of which is used to create

become filled with plastic. They also suffer from lacerations, infections, reduced ability to swim, and internal injuries. Floating plastics also help transport invasive marine species, thereby threatening marine biodiversity and the food web.

Impacts on food and human health

Microplastics have been found in tap water, beer, salt

oceans, including the Arctic. Several chemicals used in the production of plastic materials are known to be carcinogenic and to interfere with the endocrine system, causing developmental, reproductive, neurological, and immune disorders in both humans and wildlife. Recently, microplastics were found in human placentas but more research is needed to determine if this is a widespread problem.

Toxic contaminants also accumulate on the surface of plastic as a result of prolonged exposure to seawater. When marine organisms ingest plastic debris, these contaminants enter their digestive systems, and over time accumulate in the food web. The transfer of contaminants between marine species and humans through consumption of seafood has been identified as a health hazard, and research is ongoing.

Impacts on tourism

Plastic waste damages the aesthetic value of tourist destinations, leading to decreased income from tourism. It also generates major economic costs