

# **Marine Plastic Pollution**

State of Play & Perspectives

---

**Glen Wright**

# Combating marine plastic litter: state of play and perspectives

---

Julien Rochette, Romain Schumm, Glen Wright, Klaudija Cremers (IDDRI)

## Why this study?

- Proliferation of initiatives – losing sight of big picture
- Summarise ongoing efforts, promote coherence

## What is covered?

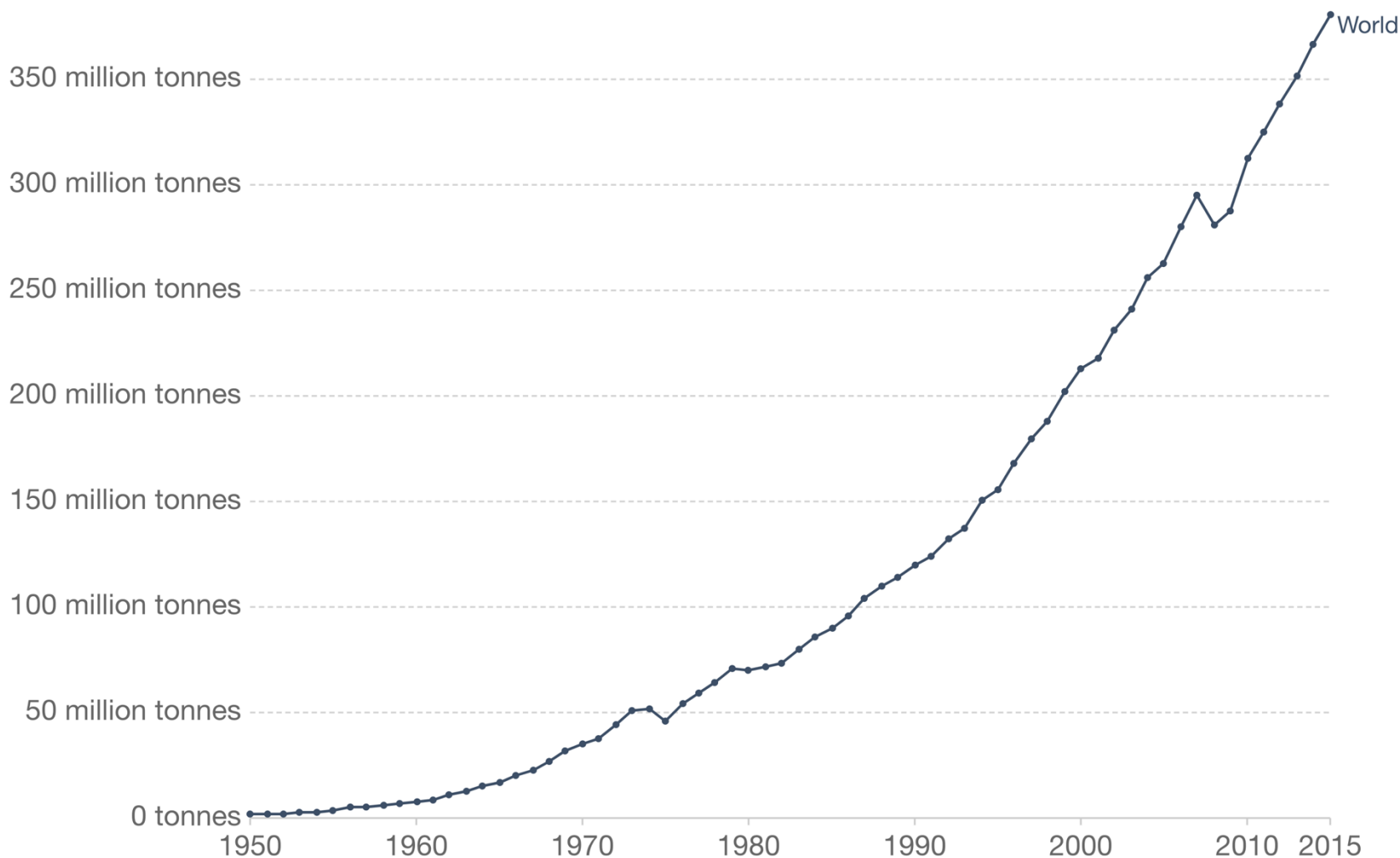
- Summary of environmental impacts
- Evaluation of legal framework
- Overview of civil society/private sector initiatives
- Discussions regarding a new treaty
- Perspectives on the future/next steps



# Global plastics production, 1950 to 2015

Annual global polymer resin and fiber production (plastic production), measured in metric tonnes per year.

Our World  
in Data



Level	Progress	Challenges
<b>National</b>	<p>A range of national efforts</p> <p>Many target single-use plastics</p> <p>Commitments, targets, strategies, financing</p>	<p>Systemic challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waste disposal systems</li> <li>• Our economic model</li> <li>• Our patterns of consumption/production</li> <li>• Producer responsibility</li> </ul>
<b>Regional</b>	<p>Many Regional Seas programmes have developed legal protocols</p> <p>Some regions also have specific action plans in place</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targets and strategies vary widely</li> <li>• Limited capacity</li> <li>• Limited private sector engagement</li> <li>• Lack of financing</li> </ul>
<b>Global</b>	<p>Various international agreements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Law of the Sea</li> <li>• London Convention on pollution/dumping</li> <li>• Chemicals conventions</li> <li>• ...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fragmented framework</li> <li>• Limited recognition of possible health impacts</li> <li>• Inadequate application of precautionary principle, transparency</li> <li>• Microplastics not covered</li> </ul>

## FIGURE 2. Examples of stakeholders' initiatives on plastic

### CLEAN-UP OPERATIONS

Beach clean-up initiatives regularly organised by international, national and local NGOs; some initiatives, e.g. [The Ocean Cleanup](#) or [The Sea Cleaners](#) to extract plastic pollution from the Ocean; global clean-up campaigns such as the UN Environment [Clean Seas](#) initiative.

### IMPROVING CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Voluntary commitments from the private sector, e.g. Danone, Nestlé and Unilever. Eliminating plastic waste at the source, e.g. [The New Plastics Economy Global Commitment](#), led by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and signed by 250 organisations.

### SCIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE

Various research projects on marine plastic litter (e.g. [Tara Mission Microplastics](#)), citizen science programmes (e.g. [CoastWatch Micro Litter](#)), awareness raising campaigns (e.g. [Planet or Plastic?](#)).

### RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Projects on plastics innovation and alternatives, e.g. [CLAIM project](#), [Parley Ocean Plastic](#), [Global Ghost Gear Initiative](#).



**Alarming rates of pollution reaching the ocean**

**A range of initiatives underway at all levels**

**International community starting to consider a new treaty**



**Recent experience with multilateralism suggest we should also pursue other avenues:**

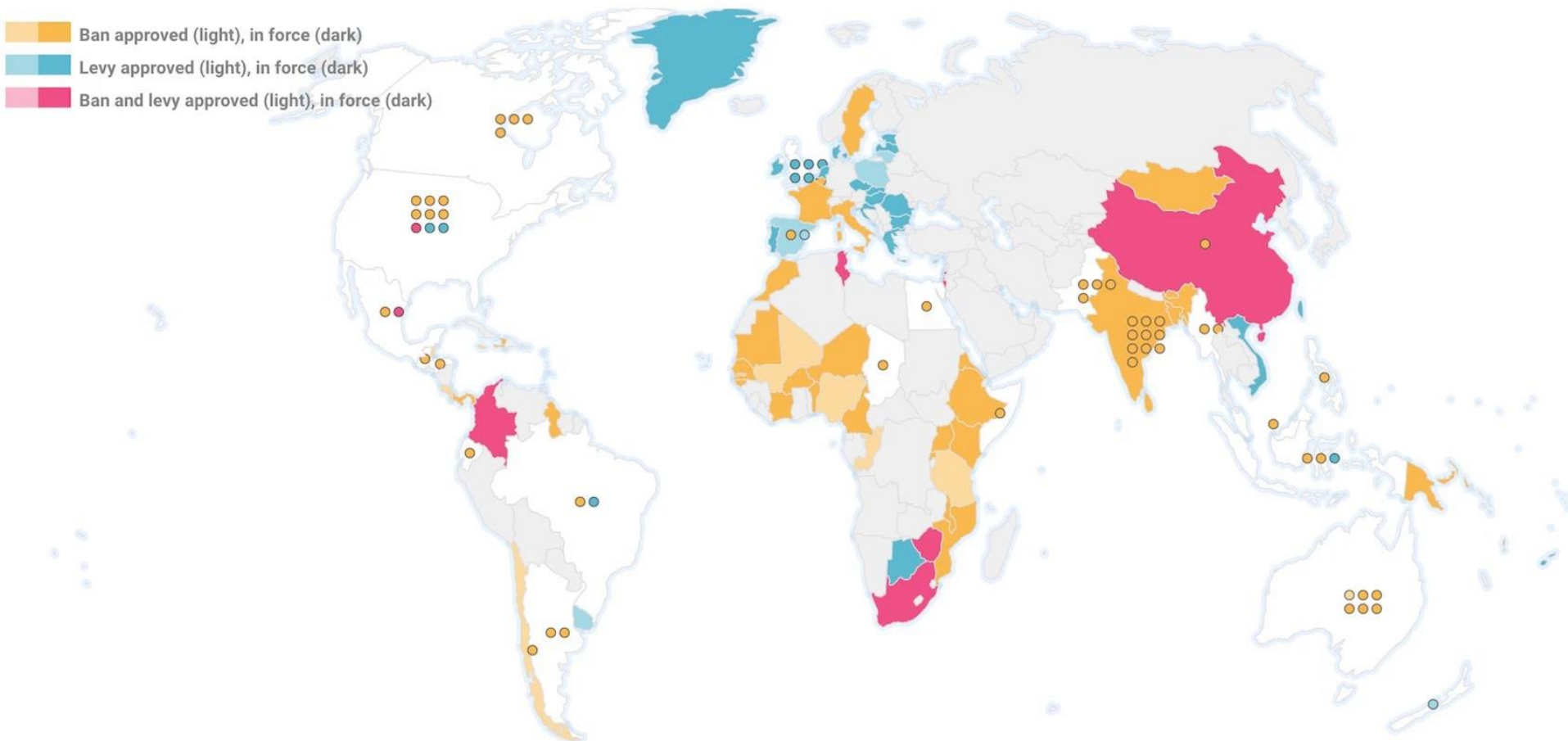
- Reinforce existing initiatives
- Better coordination at the global level
- Improve coherence between existing instruments

- 60% of plastic marine debris comes from urban centers
- 12% from megacities (>10m people)
- Waste set to double by 2050 (from 2 billion tonnes in 2016)
- 2 billion people lack access to regular waste collection
- 3 billion lack access to controlled disposal services





An impressive — and growing — number of  national and  local governments have **taken action against plastic pollution**



Data from "Banning single-use plastic: lessons and experiences from countries" UN Environment report (2018);  
map developed by <https://www.unenvironment.org/interactive/beat-plastic-pollution/>; for interactive map, please follow the link.



## PREVENTION

Avoid and minimize the use of plastic



## COLLECTION

Collect, sort and manage plastic as a resource



## DISPOSAL

Contain plastic waste in purpose built landfills



## FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

Incentives for plastic prevention, reuse and recycling



## REUSE

Reuse to extend product and material life-cycles



## RECYCLING

Recycle plastic to support a circular economy

## CONTACT

Glen Wright  
[glen.wright@iddri.org](mailto:glen.wright@iddri.org)  
[@MarinePolicy](#)

[IDDRI.ORG](http://IDDRI.ORG)