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PRESS RELEASE

The Circulate Initiative, Ocean Conservancy and Global Resilient Cities Network Announce First Cohort of Partner Cities for Urban Ocean Program

Can Tho (Vietnam), Melaka (Malaysia), Semarang (Indonesia), Pune (India) and Panama City (Panama) join program to implement scalable waste management solutions that prevent ocean plastic and advance resilient, circular economies

Singapore, 2 June 2020: The Circulate Initiative, Ocean Conservancy, and Global Resilient Cities Network today announced the first cohort of partner cities that will take part in the Urban Ocean program. The program empowers cities in South and Southeast Asia and Latin America to develop circular economies, reduce plastic waste and build cleaner, healthier and more resilient communities for the long term, particularly as they weather the impacts of the current COVID-19 crisis.

Scientists estimate 8 million metric tons of plastic enters the ocean each year¹ due to mismanaged waste - waste that is either never collected or not adequately contained. That's the equivalent of one garbage truck of plastic entering the ocean every minute. While plastic pollution costs an estimated US\$2.5 trillion to the global economy annually², the issue has serious impacts on human health and safety as well as the environment. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has both worsened existing vulnerabilities within our waste management systems and exposed new ones.

Over the next 15 months, Urban Ocean will work closely with city leaders in Can Tho (Vietnam), Melaka (Malaysia), Semarang (Indonesia), Pune (India) and Panama City (Panama), known as "learning cities", as well as other cities from the Global Resilient Cities Network community, known as "mentor cities", to link them to opportunities that improve waste management and recycling systems; reduce the amount of plastic flowing into the ocean; promote circular economies; support inclusive and equitable economic development; and build resilience for the long term.

The Circulate Initiative, Ocean Conservancy and Global Resilient Cities Network recognize that collaboration between leading cities and partners willing to invest in change at scale will help address these challenges. This first cohort of cities was selected because of their commitment to improving waste management as part of resilience-building efforts and their potential to provide solutions in geographies with high waste leakage rates (learning cities), or because they are leading the way in the fight against river and ocean plastic or in implementing circular economy approaches (mentor cities). Pune (India) is an example of a city doing both through its successful work with the informal sector, and has been selected as both a learning and mentor city.

Susan Ruffo, Executive Director at The Circulate Initiative, said, "Waste management is a critical and complex challenge for all cities around the world. We need to work with committed city leaders and

¹ EllenMacArthur & Jenna Jambeck study, 2015

² Marine Pollution Bulletin, 2019



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innovative partners to find implementable and scalable on-the-ground solutions to fight ocean plastic and advance the circular economy. We believe that working with Ocean Conservancy and Global Resilient Cities Network, in partnership with these leading cities, we will be able to develop and deliver solutions where action is needed most, at the local level.”

“The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare just how critical waste management systems are to public health and the environment,” said Chever Voltmer, plastics initiative director at Ocean Conservancy. “This is especially true in urban areas where population density and waste generation are greatest. Through Urban Ocean, we will help cities weather this storm and better prepare for future ones, while reducing plastic pollution in our ocean.”

“Having worked with 98 member cities for more than six years to address resilience challenges, we understand that moving beyond waste management towards a circular economy requires collaboration across all levels of a municipality. With the additional strain on city systems from COVID-19, we will accelerate city-to-city knowledge sharing through Urban Ocean to give waste a new life with innovative solutions that provide multiple benefits like safer and healthier jobs, stronger local economies and a healthier environment”, said Lauren Sorkin, Executive Director Global Resilient Cities Network.

The Urban Ocean program also includes other implementation partners such as the University of Georgia’s New Materials Institute³ and The Incubation Network⁴. Additional implementation partners may be selected based on specific program needs during its implementation.

As the COVID-19 crisis is seriously disrupting existing solid waste management systems, the partners have also come together to provide knowledge and tools to all cities looking for support to implement immediate actions through the Global Resilient Cities Network’s [Cities for a Resilient Recovery \(C2R\) initiative](#).

For more information on the Urban Ocean program:
<https://www.thecirculateinitiative.org/our-programs>

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³<https://newmaterials.uga.edu/>

⁴ <https://www.incubationnetwork.com/>



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About Urban Ocean

The Urban Ocean program is an evolution of the previous Urban Ocean project by Ocean Conservancy and the 100 Resilient Cities Network. Through Urban Ocean, Ocean Conservancy, Global Resilient Cities Network and The Circulate Initiative aim to achieve a genuine transformation of municipal waste management systems that will improve public health and safety, create dignified employment, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, advance the circular economy, and fight ocean plastic. They will work with city leaders to solve waste management-related problems and harness their critical role in setting policies, developing infrastructure, and driving citizen education and awareness. The program aims to enhance cities' understanding of circular economy principles, build awareness regarding the ocean plastic issues, assess the waste management situation in the respective cities and ultimately support the creation of strategies and project proposals that holistically address waste management challenges.

About Ocean Conservancy's Trash Free Seas® Program

Ocean Conservancy has led the fight for a clean, healthy ocean free of trash since 1986, when the U.S.-based nonprofit launched its annual International Coastal Cleanup (ICC). Since then, Ocean Conservancy has mobilized millions of ICC volunteers to remove trash from beaches and waterways around the world while pioneering upstream solutions to the growing ocean plastics crisis. Ocean Conservancy invests in cutting-edge scientific research, implements on-the-ground projects, and works with conservationists, scientists, governments, the private sector and members of the public to change the plastics paradigm. To learn more about our Trash Free Seas® program visit oceanconservancy.org/trashfreeseas, and follow Ocean Conservancy on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

About Global Resilient Cities Network

The Global Resilient Cities Network (GRCN) is the city-led organization that is driving urban resilience action to protect vulnerable communities from climate change and other physical, social and economic urban adversities and challenges. GRCN emerges from the former 100 Resilient Cities (100RC) program with an expanded partner base and is comprised of 98 member cities of the former





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100RC program in 40 countries. With support from The Rockefeller Foundation and other funding strategic partners, the Network aims to continue supporting cities and their Chief Resilience Officers in future-proofing their communities and critical infrastructure with a unique reach, strength and legacy to understand and support the challenges of the ever-growing urban society.

About [The Circulate Initiative](#)

The Circulate Initiative is a non-profit organization founded to end the flow of plastic into the ocean by supporting entrepreneurs who advance the circular economy and improve waste management and recycling systems, and by creating the enabling conditions they need to succeed. Our approach focuses on the incubation, measurement and amplification of inclusive solutions for waste management, recycling and the overall circular economy. With support from philanthropic and corporate partners, we connect and empower entrepreneurs, policymakers, investors, corporations and civil society with the information, tools and skills they need to implement on the ground solutions.

