

UNEP and AIT WEBINAR Series

# COVID-19 & PLASTIC POLLUTION

WHAT DID THE REGION LEARN - A REFLECTION FROM ONE YEAR OF PANDEMIC

Regional Webinar Series #1: South Asia

26 February 2021, Friday, 14:00 - 15:30 hrs (Bangkok time) GMT+7



## Background:

COVID-19, a devastating global health challenge of recent times, threatened world's economy and challenged global environmental sustainability. Mobility restriction, physical distancing and heightened care for hygiene and safety as measures to contain COVID-19 brought changes in lifestyles and consumption pattern. A surge in single-use plastic (SUP) usage as healthcare measures - disposable personal protective equipment and lifestyle changes - plastics packaging from E-commerce activities, was noticed during the pandemic. Plastics kept frontline medical professionals and even the general public safe from minimizing the risk of coronavirus exposure and transmission. However, it also resulted in additional medical plastic waste generation from hospitals, quarantine centres, and households. Similarly, a rise in E-commerce activities for daily essentials like food, and a false sense of safety in single-use plastics over reusable, caused a noticeable hike in municipal plastic packaging waste.

Inadequate and mismanagement of both medical and municipal plastic waste due to a dramatic surge in the volume of potentially infectious nature, followed by breakdowns or temporary disruption in the regular collection, treatment, recovery & recycling, and safe disposal aggravated the plastic pollution load into the terrestrial, aquatic and marine environment.

South Asia, where most municipalities and health care institutions already faced the challenge of proper waste management even in pre-COVID times, are further burdened with COVID-19 induced plastic waste. Already over a year, the pandemic is continuing with a looming danger of the second wave. This Webinar thus aims to explore how South Asia tackled and plans to navigate from the 'plastic pandemic' by discussing:

- 1. challenges** faced by the region to manage COVID-19 induced plastics and plastic packaging waste
- 2. innovations** adopted by the region (product, technology, financing and business model optimization etc.) for achieving a sustainable plastic and packaging waste management
- 3. lessons** learned by the region to tackle a continued surge in plastics in case of continued COVID-19 or future pandemics

## Agenda

- |               |  |
|---------------|--|
| 14:00 - 14:10 | <b>Opening remarks</b><br><b>Kakuko Nagatani-Yoshida</b><br><i>Regional Coordinator for Chemicals, Waste and Air Quality, UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific</i>  |
| 14:10 - 14:20 | <b>Assessment of COVID-19 plastic waste flows in South Asia</b><br><b>Amit Jain</b><br><i>Director, IRG Systems South Asia Pvt. Ltd.</i>   |
| 14:20 - 14:30 | <b>Plastic &amp; plastic packaging waste from online food delivery during COVID-19</b><br><b>Ganesh Kollegal</b><br><i>AVP-Government Affairs &amp; Public Policy, Swiggy India</i>  |
| 14:30 - 14:40 | <b>Plastic waste management in the health care sector during COVID-19 pandemic: Success stories, issues and concerns</b><br><b>Dr. Inoka Suraweera</b><br><i>Technical Head of the Environmental and Occupational Health Unit at the Ministry of Health, Sri Lanka</i> |
| 14:40 - 14:50 | <b>Health care waste management during COVID-19 pandemic - observed trends, challenges and recommendations for policy and practice</b><br><b>Terrence Thompson</b><br><i>Consultant, Environment and Health</i>  |
| 14:50 - 15:00 | <b>COVID-19 &amp; E-commerce plastic packaging</b><br><b>Prof. Chettiyappan Visvanathan</b><br><i>Professor, Asian Institute of Technology</i>   |
| 15:00 - 15:20 | <b>Q&amp;A Session</b>   |
| 15:20 - 15:30 | <b>Wrap Up &amp; Closing remarks</b><br><b>Dr. Mushtaq Ahmed Memon</b><br><i>RC for RE in Asia Pacific, UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific</i>  |

## CONTACT

**Dr. Mushtaq Ahmed Memon**  
 Regional Coordinator for Resource Efficiency  
 UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific  
 Project Manager  
 Regional Policy Advocacy Component  
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## PROFILES OF THE SPEAKERS


**Kakuko Nagatani-Yoshida**

 Regional Coordinator for Chemicals, Waste and Air Quality  
 UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

**Ms. Kakuko Nagatani- Yoshida** is the Regional Coordinator for Chemicals, Waste and Air quality, at the United Nations Environment Programme Asia and the Pacific Office in Bangkok. She is currently overseeing UNEP regional portfolios on

plastic pollution, chemicals and mercury management, and air quality and health. She has more than 20 years of professional experience in the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements, integrated environmental assessment, and conservation education.

Ms. Kakuko facilitated more than 150 multi-stakeholder consultations, planning exercises, and trainings in 40 plus countries across 3 continents. She holds a degree of MSc in Environmental Management from the University of Stirling in UK.


**Prof. Chettiyappan Visvanathan**

Professor, Asian Institute of Technology

**Chettiyappan Visvanathan** is a Professor at the Department of Energy, Environment, and Climate Change, School of Environment, Resources and Development, Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand. He lectures in Environmental Engineering and

Management Program.

Prof. Visvanathan holds a Doctoral degree in Chemical/Environmental Engineering, Institute de Genie Chimique, Institut National Polytechnique, Toulouse, France. His expertise includes Solid-liquid separation technologies for water and wastewater treatment, Clean technologies, Circular Economy in Plastic waste management and Industrial pollution control.


**Dr. Inoka Suraweera**

 Technical Head of the Environmental and Occupational Health Unit  
 Ministry of Health, Sri Lanka

**Dr Inoka Suraweera** is a board certified specialist in Community Medicine and she works as a Consultant Community Physician in the Environmental and Occupational Health Directorate, of the Ministry of Health in Sri Lanka.

Dr. Suraweera graduated from the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka with second class honors and holds Masters and Doctoral degrees in Community Medicine.


**Terrence Thompson**

Consultant, Environment and Health

**Mr. Terrence Thompson** is a highly experienced international expert on environmental health with more than 20-years of experience in the Asia-Pacific region. He was, for many years, the WHO Regional Advisor on Environmental Health in WHO's South-East Asia Region and

Western Pacific Region – a role in which he provided technical, policy and program support to a broad range of WHO environmental health programmes. His recent work, as a consultant to WHO and to UNEP, has focused on chemical safety and waste management in the health sector, environmental sustainability of health care facilities, and land-based sources of marine plastics. Mr. Thompson is a member of the International Solid Waste Association's Working Group on Health Care Waste and he is a past vice-president of the Institution of Public Health Engineers (India).


**Amit Jain**

Managing Director, IRG Systems South Asia Pvt. Ltd.

**Mr. Amit Jain**, currently, Managing Director of IRG Systems South Asia Pvt. Ltd. has more than twenty five years of professional experience in the area of energy, environment & natural resources and disaster management. He has worked

as consultant to bilateral and multilateral agencies like USAID, GIZ, ADB, The World Bank and UN agencies UNEP, UNDP, UNCRD etc. He has completed a number of projects on waste management including MSW, Plastic waste, Mercury waste, E-waste/ WEEE management in India and abroad (15 countries). He has advised more than ten national governments, trained their national, provincial and state governments on strategizing, planning and implementation of waste management in Asia and Pacific. He is working as a consultant to UN Environment/ UNEP on waste management. He has authored a number of UNEP's publications on Plastic waste, E-waste and municipal solid waste management. He is authored twelve international publications in indexed journals / proceedings / books and is also a reviewer of international publications.

He has completed his MBA International Business (Specialization in Finance), M.Tech. Biotechnology & Bio-Chemical Engineering (specialisation in Environmental Biotechnology), and B. Tech Chemical Technology.


**Ganesh Kollegal**

AVP - Government Affairs &amp; Public Policy, Swiggy, India

**Mr. Ganesh Kollegal** comes with over 20 years of wide-ranging experience in Public Policy, Public Affairs, Government Relations, Policy Advocacy & Communications. He has been advocating for policy changes and mitigating many issues. Prior to joining Swiggy, Mr. Kollegal was Senior Manager at

Amazon leading the Policy for Amazon Ops, AMZL, ADCI, ARIPL etc.

He has previously worked for Novo Nordisk, BATF, TIDE, Horizons Porter Novelli among others. Mr. Kollegal is a Civil engineer with a PGDBA in Marketing from Symbiosis.


**Dr. Mushtaq Ahmed Memon**

Regional coordinator for Resource Efficiency in Asia Pacific, UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

Dr. Memon is working with UN Environment (United Nations Environment Programme) as a Regional Coordinator for Resource Efficiency in Asia Pacific Office located in Bangkok. He is supporting

resource efficiency, sustainable consumption and production, green economy, green financing, sustainable public procurement, sustainable tourism, sustainable industries and various areas for Asia and the Pacific. Dr. Memon is also implementing EU funded SWITCH-Asia Phase 2 component by UN Environment to support Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 12 on sustainable consumption and production in the region.

Dr. Memon got his Masters in Project Management and National Development from University of Bradford in UK, and Doctorate in Environmental and Resource Economics and Management at Hiroshima University in Japan.

## CONTACT

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