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SA PLASTICS INDUSTRY LAUNCHES OPERATION CLEAN SWEEP: CONCERTED EFFORTS TO REDUCE PLASTIC POLLUTION AT SEA



Above: Plastics | SA and Tsogo Sun supported the Miss Earth ambassadors with a beach clean-up at the Durban beachfront

DURBAN, 14 June 2017. The South African plastics industry recently launched Operation Clean Sweep on World Oceans Day (8 June 2017) at the uShaka Marine World, Durban.

According to Douw Steyn, Sustainability Director at Plastics | SA, the primary goal of the campaign is to stop plastic pellets, flakes and powder used in the plastics industry, from reaching the sea.

"We as the plastics industry produce the pellets and flakes used to manufacture plastic bags, bottles and other plastic products. When these micro-plastics are spilt during the manufacturing process, they are swept into drains from where they enter the sewerage system and eventually end up in our rivers and ultimately the sea. These pellets are smaller than a sunflower seed in length, therefore not easy to pick up during regular beach clean-ups. As a result, they are ingested by turtles, birds and marine life," Steyn explains.

Mark Liptrot, Sustainability Manager at the packaging company, Constantia Afripak, said the extended effect of plastics on the ocean is a growing problem as micro-plastics attract chemical pollutants that are ingested by marine life, which, in turn, is eaten by other marine animals.

Addressing the media, industry and members of the public who attended the breakfast launch, Steyn emphasised that plastics are integral to every aspect of our lives, particularly in protecting food from contamination.

"It is *where* we use it, *how* we use it and *what* we do with the plastic product once we are done with it, that is important. To address this problem and offer a workable solution, Plastics | SA launched "**Operation Clean Sweep**" - a worldwide drive aimed at reducing the amount of plastic pellets that end up in rivers and ultimately in the ocean", Steyn said.

He added that the plastics industry as a whole had a role to play –from the producers and importers of raw materials pellets and flakes, to the converters and manufacturers of plastic products, as well as the recycling companies.

"Our goal is to achieve zero pellet, flake, and powder loss. Whilst it might seem to be an ambitious target, we believe it is possible through containment and the implementation of good housekeeping practices," he said.

Catherine Constantinides, head of Miss Earth South Africa endorsed Operation Clean Sweep. "To help highlight the importance of clean oceans, Miss Earth SA ambassadors took part in 100 beach clean-ups across the country. But it's not just cleaning up that's important. Educating and creating awareness are equally necessary. If we don't educate, we will be doing clean-ups for the next 20 years of World Ocean Day. We are appealing to retailers and the public at large to realise that they too have a vital role to play in ensuring that plastic products and waste do not end up polluting the environment," Constantinides implored.

Notes to the editor:

World Oceans Day Background:

- [The Ocean Project](#) has promoted and coordinated World Oceans Day globally since 2002. We do so with a team based in the US and also advisors and volunteers in dozens of countries. We are a collaborative organization and work in partnership with hundreds of organizations, including [World Ocean Network](#), the [Association of Zoos and Aquariums](#), and many other networks from all sectors. Thank you to the Government of Canada for proposing the concept of a World Ocean Day, at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and to the United Nations for officially recognizing 8 June as World Oceans Day, since late 2008. World Oceans Day® is trademarked to protect it from those who might have commercial or counterproductive interests. All information, materials and resources on this site and associated with World Oceans Day are free to use to those who are celebrating World Oceans Day as a way to bring about a healthier ocean and a better future.
- World Oceans Day is celebrated around the world in cities and rural villages, close to the sea and far inland. In fact, over 600 events were hosted around the world last year.

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