

POLLUTION AND PLASTICS POLICY

PREAMBLE

Pollution is a major threat to all life on Earth -- for human health, flora, fauna, and entire ecosystems. It affects everyone, has no boundaries, and damages natural restorative systems. Many air pollutants cause global warming, cause massive contamination of waterways, rivers and oceans, as well as airborne and land contamination. Therefore, pollution has to be stopped at source by reducing or halting polluting industries and transitioning to a zero waste economy encouraging reuse of all products within a closed loop system. This can be achieved through pollution reduction measures, strengthening and enforcing laws on pollution, and moving societies towards sustainable lifestyles based on a circular economy by limiting the environmental impact and waste of resources. The single use of plastic and microbeads need to be eliminated as soon as possible with alternatives being moved into production.

VISION

The vision is to have clear pollution reduction targets and reduce plastics production and consumption. As part of a new Green economy, our vision includes transition to clean industries, monitoring and reduction of pollution, and setting up comprehensive reuse and recycling programs leading to zero waste. At the core is a circular economy, a whole system approach that aims to eliminate rather than manage waste. It minimises the use of resources and the creation of waste, pollution, and carbon emissions, while ensuring that pollution levels do not cause damage to human health either immediately or over generations.

OBJECTIVE

The objective is to have strong international and national measures to reduce pollution, including ratification and implementation of international treaties such as the Basil, Stockholm, and Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) treaties. Production of illegal chemicals such as those listed in the dirty dozen and other POPs should no longer be produced. State-based reuse and recycling industries to create local jobs should be encouraged as integral parts of government programs gearing to a zero waste strategy and a circular economy. Waste reduction measures should be implemented instead of incineration and hazardous chemical burning or dumping. National agreements need to be in place including monitoring measures for pollution reduction caused by industry, agriculture and urbanisation; and for plastic reduction and recycling.

ACTION PLAN

The rapid development of many cities and industrial processes has led to poor air quality and associated health problems for many citizens. Pollution reduces our ability to manage resources and natural systems in a sustainable and ecological way. It is a global responsibility for all countries to accept full economic and environmental responsibility for their own pollution. The Greens will –

Toxic Chemicals and Waste

- Reduce the use of toxic chemicals, pesticides, and the production of waste
- Abide by international conventions banning dumping of toxic waste and production of chemicals
- Determine socially and environmentally acceptable levels for pollutants including that some should no longer be produced due to environmental impact and health issues
- Government regulations and processes including site checks need to be implemented for pollution monitoring and reduction measures.
- Require industries to systematically audit their production procedures and to publish details of their chemical usage and emissions in public registers
- Ban import of toxic, hazardous, or radioactive waste for treatment, reprocessing, or disposal
- Ensure no toxic material is discharged to the public sewerage system or waterways
- Implement a zero waste strategy at all levels of government for disposal of garbage and waste, including a polluter pays onus on industry for their own containment and waste processes
- Create conditions so that clean air, clean water, endangered species and ecosystems, are not threatened due to mining activities, waste storage, waste incineration, dirty production facilities, and other industries
- Include environmental education and training on waste reduction, reuse and recycling in school and tertiary curricula, and general public/residential outreach

Clean Energy

- Phase out fossil-fuel based energy generation, increase clean electricity generation, and invest in energy efficiency to reduce pollution caused by electricity generation (*see also Energy Policy and Climate Change Policy*)
- Phase out government subsidies including R&D funding to the fossil fuel industries
- Introduce zero waste strategies including no incineration of waste
- Eliminate nuclear power and subsequently nuclear waste
- Eliminate environmentally-destructive fuels produced from unsustainable or toxic feed-stocks from agriculture, or fuels contaminated with persistent toxins or waste
- Increase clean electricity generation primarily based on renewable and clean energy sources
- Increase investment in sustainable public transport and solutions to minimize pollution caused by transportation
- Disallow further oil and gas drilling or exploration on land, lakes, or the seabed

Plastic

- Set a goal of zero waste by 2030 for the entire waste stream including all plastics
- Ban or phase-out all single-use plastics such as straws, containers, plastic bags (except those used for medical or security purposes)
- Use and promote reusable and biodegradable alternatives to plastic packaging
- Incentivise reparability rather than disposability for electronics and other goods. Legislate for life long products that can be repaired
- Impose a variable recovery charge on all packaging and short-life disposable products, including on imported goods, with the revenue used to finance waste recovery schemes

- Address plastic pollution, including microbeads, through production reduction and clean up initiatives

Health Considerations

- Give precedence to environmental and health considerations regarding pollution reduction measures
- Guarantee public's right to know about the health and environmental aspects of pollution, including a public register of contaminants, air and water pollution
- Introduce and abide by strict environmental impact and improvement analysis into all public planning decisions and ensure free public access to the evidence used in both the analysis and in the final assessment
- Introduce mandatory deposits, refundable by retailers, to encourage the separate collection of toxic waste materials, such as batteries

Pollution Reduction Measures

- Establish a system for monitoring, approving and licencing new and established products and production processes using criteria based on the principles of zero waste, minimum pollution, maximum energy efficiency, safety, and environmental improvement
- Control and monitor storage of all radioactive waste and mining tailings derived from the manufacturing industry, medical sources, and from nuclear power
- Reduce and monitor environmental pollution levels through changes to industry, waste disposal, agricultural run-off, and other pollution sources. Ensure levels do not damage natural communities of terrestrial, aquatic, or airborne plants and animals
- Monitor the environment to ensure comparability of data and to ensure the effective transmission of all relevant data on pollution between states through international agencies such as the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) clean air measures
- Issue government guidelines to manufacturers and district authorities for the full traceability and labelling of all products for sale to point of origin
- Industry to maintain records and to make available to government agencies the statistical information relating to worker exposure and waste management from industry on request
- Hold individuals and organisations legally responsible for generating pollution and the full costs of control for any damage caused

Waste Disposal

- Empower and incentivise local authorities to establish waste recovery and sorting facilities for the collection of all domestic and commercial waste and to sell recovered materials to industry for recycling
- Enter into joint arrangements with waste disposal authorities to build digestion plants to produce biogas, biomass and/or compost from organic waste from agricultural sources, sewage, and municipal waste
- Prohibit discharge of industrial waste into waterways and domestic sewers. Introduce zero waste industry employment schemes in waste reduction, reuse, and recycling sectors

Recycling and Reuse

- Have a clear hierarchy of waste treatments, with reuse first, followed by recycling and composting, followed by treating the residual waste in non-polluting ways that produce useful products like biogas, and the least possible quantity of inert material for landfill
- Promote local industries that generate recycled materials
- Encourage manufacturing processes that use recycled materials
- Invest in local recycling infrastructure and jobs
- Recycle metals that go to the landfills as part of a waste recovery industry
- Intensify research into the recycling of secondary raw materials
- Provide incentives for citizens to readily participate in recycling and reuse schemes
- Aim for municipalities/councils to recover for recycling at least 80 percent of recyclable domestic waste within five years
- Introduce specifications to boost recycled content in packaging to reduce landfill, reduce consumption of raw materials, and produce no waste
- Establish a standards commission to exercise quality control on consumer products, setting minimum standards for safety and design, recyclability, durability, ease of repair and maximum energy efficiency in use
- Introduce a deposit and return scheme including drink containers

Minimisation of Pollution at Source

- Minimise consumption of new natural resources and, in particular, non-renewable resources
- Phase out routine use of non-renewable materials for product uses in which they cannot be easily recycled for the same purpose
- Introduce new priorities for waste management so that unnecessary waste is avoided and so that the efficient reuse, recycling, composting or digestion of waste is maximised
- Work towards a target of zero waste – the concept that encompasses producer responsibility, eco-design, waste reduction, reuse, and recycling within a single framework with the aim of eliminating altogether waste sent to landfill or incinerators
- Establish a government body to be responsible for resource exploration and assessment, maintenance of standards in mining, quarrying, and forestry, and provision of ecological, geological, archaeological and engineering advice

Domestic Waste

- Ensure comprehensive waste management systems that collect recyclables, compostables and hazardous waste materials
- Encourage domestic composting as it reduces the transport of waste and adds to carbon sequestration
- Educate and persuade householders to separate their waste into dry recyclables, compostable wastes and residual refuse, and not to place certain hazardous items, for example paint, pesticides and items containing batteries, into the municipal waste stream

Environmental Justice and Enforcement

- Adopt and enforce adequate civil and criminal sanctions for polluting activities
- Prevent, mitigate and manage the pollution of air, land and soil, freshwater, and oceans

- Remediate areas of soil pollution, including in areas impacted by conflict and terrorism
- Support a holistic approach to justice, recognising environmental justice, social justice and economic justice can all be impacted by pollutants

International Measures

- Adhere to international treaties on the import and export of waste including electronic waste
- Establish an international code of conduct for transnational companies to minimise environmental damage and prevent harm to local and indigenous populations from resource extraction
- Address pollution from resource extraction from transnational companies through government and international fora

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