Implemented by and

UNEP and Government of Sri Lanka announce a new collaboration to fight plastic pollution in rivers

Colombo/Bangkok, 20 August 2021 – With new research showing the major role that rivers play in bringing plastic pollution to the oceans, countries are looking for ways to tackle the root causes of the problem in their own waterways. In response, the Sri Lankan government is set to partner with the UN Environment Programme's (UNEP) CounterMEASURE project to track down sources and pathways of plastic waste in the country's rivers.

The CounterMEASURE project has developed a unique approach to tracking plastic pollution, using frontier technology like machine learning, GIS mapping, drones, microplastic sampling and citizen science. The methods and models have been tested and deployed along the Mekong River in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Viet Nam and along the Ganges and its tributaries in India. Findings are used to develop bespoke policy recommendations for lawmakers and regulators at local, regional and national levels.

"CounterMEASURE's approach has been proven to be an efficient and effective way for policymakers to understand how the plastic pollution problem affects rivers in their countries," said Dechen Tsering, UNEP's Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific. "We're proud to be able to work with Sri Lanka on this important issue."

"This project is timely and complements the Government initiative to introduce an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) system for post-consumer plastic waste and prohibit number of plastic products that are harmful to the ecosystem," said Dr. Ananda Mallawatantri, Country Representative of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), a partner organization to the UN Environment Programme's CounterMEASURE implementation in Sri Lanka.

Dr. Anil jasinghe, Secretary for Sri Lanka's Ministry of Environment stated: "The CounterMEASURE project will be a boost to the Surakimu Ganga program initiated by the Ministry of Environment to make all our rivers clean. The objectives of CounterMEASURE are very much in line with Sri Lanka's efforts to minimize ocean plastic pollution through land based activities. It requires the active participation of the public and private sectors, supported by a strong awareness. The Government cannot do this alone and we appreciate the UN Environment Programme's initiative to bring global experience on hotspot analysis and cutting-edge technology."

Notes to Editors

About the Ministry of Environment, Sri Lanka
The Ministry of Environment of Sri Lanka remains committed for the management of the environment and natural resources of the country, maintaining the equilibrium between the trends in rapid economic development and use of natural resource base.

With the support From the People of Japan

Implemented by and

Social and economic behavior of the increasing human population has put a major threat in achieving these objectives. The Ministry has framed key policies for adoption in management of environment and natural resources of the country. These policies are implemented with the participation of stakeholders including government, agencies, NGO's and communities.

About the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
UNEP is the leading global voice on the environment. It provides leadership and encourages partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.

About CounterMEASURE
The Japan-funded CounterMEASURE project works to identify sources and pathways of plastic pollution in river systems in Asia, particularly the Mekong and the Ganges. The project has developed plastic leakage models for localities in 6 different countries using an innovative and replicable approach. Deploying technologies like GIS, machine learning and drones has allowed the CounterMEASURE team to augment ground-level research in an efficient and scalable way. This scientific knowledge can then be used to inform policy decisions and actions to beat plastic pollution and ensure rivers are free of plastic waste.

For more information, please contact:
Keisha Rukikaire, Head, News and Media, UN Environment Programme (UNEP), rukikaire@un.org

Dr Manoj Prasanna, Coordinator, Surakimu Ganga Program, Ministry Of Environment, Sri Lanka, mprasanna74@yahoo.com

With the support
From the People of Japan