



Greater transparency across the plastics supply chain crucial to ending ocean plastic pollution

2 November 2020, 12.00am CST – A new report has revealed how global efforts to reduce plastic waste are being thwarted by a lack of transparency that extends the length and breadth of the plastics supply chain.

Every month, over one million tons of plastic enters rivers and oceans worldwide, and billions of dollars are spent by governments in attempting to manage plastic waste. At the same time, much of the industry of plastic producers, users and investors operate under a shroud of mystery.

Global efforts to change industry practices, including producing less plastic from virgin feedstock, collecting more plastic waste, and increasing recycling, are all significantly hampered by a lack of data, information and intelligence, and well-intentioned efforts are falling short of their expectations and potential.

To address this challenge, Minderoo Foundation and SYSTEMIQ have devised and reported a global approach to transparency, titled *“Clearing a Path Through the Waste: Transparency in the Plastics Supply Chain”*, to inspire the appropriate action from public and private sector stakeholders, and from civil society groups.

“The current lack of transparency extends to all players in the plastics supply chain – from producers and users of plastics, to waste managers and investors,” Nakul Saran, COO of Minderoo Foundation’s Sea The Future program, said.

“There is little-to-no information on how materials flow from production to disposal, how virgin plastics production is funded, the true impact of plastic pollution on social, environmental and economic systems, and on the responsibilities, strategies and commitments of stakeholders involved.

“The climate crisis is just one example of how shining a light on industry supply chains can expose important issues. While there is a long way to go, it shows that supply chain transparency can lead to greater consumer awareness and action, industry taking responsibility, and positive change.

“For the world to do something effective to address the plastic pollution crisis, we first need to shine a light on the entire supply chain of plastics from source-to-sink, and enable better decision-making.”

The current lack of transparency leads to a misallocation of resources which diminishes the effectiveness of efforts to deal with plastic pollution. “Without transparency, companies and investors do not know the extent to which they are exposed to economic, legal and reputational risks from plastic pollution,” Dominic Charles, one of the report’s authors and Director of Finance & Transparency at Minderoo Foundation’s Sea The Future program, said.

“Equally, governments and regulators have major problems in creating effective policies for plastic pollution and directing limited resources to protect health, ecosystems, and the economy. Above all, it is not possible to hold producers and users of plastics to account without transparency into their plastics footprints.”

The report’s authors outline three mutually reinforcing approaches that can contribute to greater transparency in the global plastics system:



- Firstly, outside-in and shadow reporting based on the collection, analysis and publication of data, knowledge and insights (regardless of the involvement of industry) by academic institutions, non-government organisations, intergovernmental organisations and commercial analysts.
- Secondly, increased public and investor pressure for the voluntary disclosure of data and information by industry to better compare plastic producers and users and motivate them to improve.
- And finally, increased, regulated disclosure of data and information on plastic use, impacts and mitigation strategies by governments and policymakers.

These practices cannot be implemented in isolation. They require the joint commitment of industry, investors, regulators and society. The report has identified six high-priority transparency issues which together constitute a comprehensive roadmap for action.

“While the amount of ocean plastic flow is expected to triple in the next 20 years, the good news is that we have today all the technologies to dramatically reduce this by 80 per cent in the same timeframe,” SYSTEMIQ founder and managing partner Martin Stuchtey said.

“But make no mistake, this will not be easy. We need to start from a place of radical transparency across the supply chain – from petrochemical suppliers and producers, to retailers and recyclers. This data provides the basis from which business and government can take effective decisions and actions to end ocean plastic pollution in a generation.”

To move towards a world that is free of plastic pollution and with high circularity, far more ambitious, efficient and comprehensive measures are needed. The report maps a pathway to institutionalise greater transparency in the plastics supply chain which, in turn, enables these lofty aims to be achieved.

Estimates suggest that plastic costs the world more than US\$2.2 trillion a year in environmental and social damage. This unacceptable cost to humanity led Andrew and Nicola Forrest’s Minderoo Foundation to establish the “Sea the Future” initiative to encourage every person across the plastics supply chain to leverage their ability to change the way the world uses and wastes plastic.

To access the report “*Clearing a Path Through the Waste: Transparency in the Plastics Supply Chain*”, visit <https://www.minderoo.org/flourishing-oceans/#resources>

About Minderoo Foundation:

Established by Andrew and Nicola Forrest in 2001, Minderoo Foundation is a modern philanthropic organisation seeking to break down barriers, innovate and drive positive, lasting change. Minderoo Foundation is proudly Australian, with nine key initiatives spanning from ocean research and ending slavery, to collaboration against cancer and building community projects.

About Systemiq:

SYSTEMIQ is a B Corp created in 2016 to drive achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement by transforming markets and business models across three areas: land use, materials and energy. Working with partners across sectors, SYSTEMIQ aims to unlock economic opportunities that benefit business, society and the environment. To learn more, visit www.systemiq.earth.

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