

## **WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY 2025: BEATING PLASTIC POLLUTION**

**By Gumel Abubakar Ali**

World Environment Day (WED) 2025, scheduled for June 5, will focus on the theme "Beat Plastic Pollution," underscoring the urgent need for collective global action to combat the escalating crisis of plastic waste. This theme aims to galvanize individuals, communities, and organizations to collaborate on sustainable solutions that mitigate plastic pollution and its detrimental effects on ecosystems, marine life, and human health. Given that plastic pollution has reached alarming levels, affecting biodiversity and contributing to significant health costs, the 2025 observance seeks to foster a culture of environmental stewardship and responsible consumption across the globe. The initiative encourages a comprehensive approach to addressing plastic waste, advocating for reductions in plastic use, enhanced recycling efforts, and the exploration of alternatives to single-use plastics.

Activities on World Environment Day will include tree-planting campaigns, clean-up drives, and educational workshops designed to engage communities in raising awareness about the environmental impacts of plastic pollution and promoting sustainable practices. The observance aims not only to celebrate environmental conservation but also to catalyze long-term commitments to sustainability beyond the event itself. In addition to fostering local engagement, WED 2025 will highlight the importance of international collaboration, particularly in light of ongoing negotiations for a global treaty addressing plastic pollution. These discussions reflect a growing recognition of the need for coordinated efforts to establish effective waste management practices and safeguard marine environments from pollution. The event serves as a rallying point for stakeholders, emphasizing that collective action is essential in confronting one of the most pressing environmental challenges of our time. The significance of World Environment Day 2025 lies in its ability to mobilize a diverse array of participants, from youth organizations to local communities, while fostering dialogue and innovative solutions to plastic pollution. By inspiring individuals to take meaningful action, the day aims to build a resilient culture of environmental responsibility that can address current and future ecological crises.

### **Theme for 2025**

World Environment Day 2025 will focus on the theme "Beat Plastic Pollution," highlighting the urgent need for collective action to address the pervasive issue of plastic waste globally. This initiative aims to rally individuals, communities, and organizations to work together towards sustainable solutions that combat plastic pollution and promote environmental health. The emphasis on this theme comes as plastic pollution has become a significant environmental concern, affecting ecosystems, marine life, and human health. Plastics are found in oceans, rivers, and even in the food chain, making it crucial to tackle this issue comprehensively. The campaign

encourages stakeholders to reduce plastic consumption, support recycling initiatives, and explore alternatives to single-use plastics, fostering a culture of sustainability and responsible consumption. As part of the celebration, participants are encouraged to engage in activities that raise awareness and promote action against plastic pollution, reinforcing the idea that every individual can contribute to creating a cleaner and healthier planet. Ultimately, World Environment Day 2025 serves as a call to action, aiming to inspire positive change and foster a commitment to environmental conservation that extends beyond a single day of observance.

### **Events and Activities**

World Environment Day (WED), celebrated annually on June 5, inspires a wide range of events and activities aimed at raising awareness about environmental issues and encouraging global participation in sustainability efforts. The day serves as a platform for individuals, communities, and organizations to engage in eco-friendly initiatives that promote a cleaner and safer environment.

### **Global Participation**

On this day, various events are organized globally, including tree-planting campaigns, clean-up drives, and educational workshops designed to educate the public about environmental protection. These activities are often community-focused, inviting people of all ages to take part in making their surroundings cleaner and safer, ultimately fostering a collective responsibility towards environmental stewardship.

### **Thematic Celebrations**

Each year, World Environment Day revolves around a specific theme that highlights a pressing environmental issue. For example, the 2025 celebration is expected to address the urgency of combating illegal wildlife trade, a theme aligned with the global need to protect biodiversity and promote sustainable practices. Events such as street rallies, parades, and exhibitions are organized to draw attention to these themes, mobilizing communities to participate actively in the dialogue and action surrounding environmental challenges.

### **Youth Involvement**

Youth organizations play a crucial role during WED celebrations, with many events specifically designed to engage younger generations. These include workshops, eco-friendly initiatives, and competitions aimed at fostering a sense of responsibility and empowerment among youth to take action against environmental degradation. Through these platforms, young people can share knowledge, forge alliances, and participate in global discussions on environmental issues.

## **Local and National Activities**

Activities vary by country, often reflecting local environmental concerns and cultural practices. National and international collaborations lead to diverse celebrations, from beach clean-ups and tree plantation drives to art festivals and educational campaigns in schools and universities. The aim is not only to celebrate the day but also to catalyze ongoing efforts for sustainability and conservation throughout the year.

## **Environmental Issues Addressed**

### **Plastic Pollution**

World Environment Day 2023 spotlighted the urgent challenge of plastic pollution, promoting the theme “Beat Plastic Pollution.” This campaign galvanized individuals, communities, and organizations globally to seek innovative solutions to reduce plastic use and mitigate its environmental impact. The initiative emphasized the need to reconsider our relationship with plastic, advocating for sustainable alternatives, increased recycling efforts, and support for environmentally friendly technologies.

### **Health and Environmental Impact**

The implications of plastic pollution extend beyond environmental degradation, significantly affecting human health. Studies indicate that global plastic production surpasses 300 million tons annually, with a substantial portion intended for single-use applications. Alarmingly, only 9% of all plastic waste produced has been recycled, leading to considerable health-related costs projected to exceed \$250 billion annually by 2025 due to the repercussions of plastic production and incineration. Additionally, an estimated 11 million tonnes of plastic waste enter aquatic ecosystems each year, contributing to biodiversity loss and pollution crises.

### **Global Response and Treaty Development**

Efforts to combat plastic pollution are gaining momentum on an international scale, with countries working towards a global treaty to address this pressing issue. The fifth session of negotiations to establish a plastic pollution treaty took place in November 2024 in the Republic of Korea, with subsequent discussions scheduled in Geneva in August 2025. This treaty aims to facilitate collaborative strategies to reduce plastic waste and protect marine environments from pollution.

### **Collective Action and Education**

The observance of World Environment Day serves as a call to action, highlighting the importance of education in addressing plastic pollution. Engaging communities in discussions about reducing plastic usage and fostering environmental stewardship can empower individuals to make informed choices that contribute to sustainability. This grassroots activism is vital for creating a collective impact on global environmental challenges, emphasizing that pollution is often a choice that can be changed through concerted efforts.

## **Key Messages**

### **Importance of Collective Action**

The 2025 theme, “Beat Plastic Pollution,” emphasizes the necessity for united global efforts to address the escalating crisis of plastic waste. The slogan “Shared Challenge, Shared Solution” encapsulates the idea that tackling plastic pollution requires collaboration among individuals, communities, businesses, and governments alike. It calls for a collective commitment to reducing plastic use and enhancing waste management practices to safeguard our environment for future generations.

### **Community Engagement and Education**

Effective strategies to combat plastic pollution hinge on raising awareness and educating communities about the impact of plastic waste. Engaging local populations through initiatives such as consumer awareness campaigns, school programs, and cleanup activities can significantly alter perceptions regarding plastic use and its environmental consequences. Empowering individuals to adopt sustainable practices will foster a culture of environmental stewardship and collective responsibility.

### **Promoting Sustainable Practices**

To successfully mitigate plastic pollution, it is crucial to advocate for sustainable practices at all levels of society. This includes promoting the use of alternatives to single-use plastics, supporting businesses that prioritize eco-friendly materials, and encouraging governments to implement policies that regulate plastic production and waste management. By championing sustainable choices, communities can contribute to a healthier planet.

### **Drawing Inspiration from Nature**

World Environment Day 2025 encourages drawing inspiration from nature to devise innovative solutions to plastic pollution. Recognizing the interconnectedness of ecosystems can help inform strategies that not only address waste but also enhance biodiversity and promote ecological resilience. Solutions inspired by natural processes may lead to more sustainable approaches in waste reduction and resource management.

## **Building a Culture of Resilience**

Fostering a culture of resilience is vital in the face of environmental challenges. By prioritizing climate awareness and action, communities can develop adaptive strategies that enhance their capacity to cope with the impacts of plastic pollution and other environmental issues. This proactive approach not only addresses current challenges but also prepares societies for future ecological crises.

## **Partnerships and Collaborations**

### **Importance of Stakeholder Engagement**

Collaborating with a diverse range of stakeholders is essential to enhance advocacy efforts for environmental sustainability. Building strong partnerships with relevant organizations, particularly policymakers, can ensure that health considerations are effectively integrated into environmental negotiations and policy implementations. This approach is critical in addressing pressing issues such as plastic pollution treaties, where collective efforts can significantly amplify impact and drive positive change for a healthier planet.

### **Public-Private Partnerships**

The "Partnership for a Healthy Planet," initiated in 1993, emphasized the need for collaboration between governments, businesses, and communities in the pursuit of environmental health. This initiative called for public-private partnerships and community engagement, urging stakeholders to collaborate on sustainable development projects and pollution prevention efforts. Such partnerships are pivotal in leveraging resources and fostering a united front against environmental challenges.

### **Supporting Innovation and Research**

Encouraging innovation and research is vital in the quest for sustainable alternatives to plastics. By supporting research initiatives focused on alternative materials and eco-friendly practices, particularly in sectors like healthcare, stakeholders can significantly contribute to reducing plastic waste. Investment in innovative projects aimed at decreasing plastic usage not only helps transition industries toward more sustainable models but also safeguards human health and the environment.

### **Awareness and Education Campaigns**

Raising awareness about the health effects of plastic pollution is crucial for protecting vulnerable communities. Comprehensive awareness campaigns can inform the public about the dangers posed by plastic pollutants. Educational programs and workshops are instrumental in equipping

individuals with knowledge about sustainable practices, plastic reduction strategies, and proper disposal methods, ultimately promoting responsible behavior and fostering long-term change.

### **Global Initiatives and Cooperation**

Recent initiatives such as "Champions of Change," launched ahead of the Global Plastics Treaty negotiations, illustrate the growing momentum for collaboration. This initiative unites various stakeholders, including business leaders and environmental organizations, to advocate for significant policy changes such as capping plastic production and phasing out single-use plastics. Such cooperative efforts signify a collective recognition of the urgent need to address plastic pollution through coordinated actions and shared responsibilities.

### **Media Coverage**

The media plays a crucial role in shaping public perception of environmental issues and youth-led climate activism. Studies have highlighted the framing of young climate activists in various media outlets, revealing a tendency to marginalize their political agenda. For instance, von Zabern and Tulloch (2021) conducted a rhetorical analysis of media coverage surrounding the Fridays for Future movement in Germany, identifying seven distinct frames utilized by news outlets that often reproduce existing power structures and depoliticize the activists' message. Similarly, Bergmann and Ossewaarde (2020) examined German newspapers and found that both left-wing and right-wing publications employed ageist language, which served to delegitimize the voices of young climate activists. In addition to print media, social media has emerged as a significant platform for climate activism. Research indicates that young activists effectively use social media to build coalitions and foster emotional connections among supporters. For example, Wielk and Standlee (2021) highlighted how social media allows young activists to project their identities, create compelling narratives, and engage in meaningful political discussions, thereby enhancing group cohesion and emotional attachment. Furthermore, studies show that media representation often leads to a skewed understanding of youth activism, with many articles presenting a narrow view that undermines the complexity of their demands and experiences. Moreover, the dominance of adult voices in discussions about youth-led climate strikes has been critiqued. Huttunen and Albrecht (2021) observed that adult perspectives frequently overshadow the narratives of young activists, further reinforcing power imbalances within the discourse surrounding climate action. This trend is mirrored in U.S. media, where Hess (2021) critiques the reduction of Generation Z to a singular narrative, arguing that such portrayals simplify and distort the diverse motivations and goals of young activists. As World Environment Day 2025 approaches, it is imperative to recognize and address these media framing challenges. Celebratory events and

campaigns should strive to highlight the nuanced voices of young activists and encourage a broader understanding of their critical role in the fight against climate change.