

PRESS RELEASE, Monday, March 5, 2018

Global campaign challenges Starbucks to keep its promise to curb plastic pollution, create 100% recyclable cup

Leading environmental organizations launch “Starbucks: Break Free From Plastic” campaign to confront coffee giant on its plastic pollution problem prior to annual shareholder meeting in Seattle

SEATTLE, WA — Today, more than a dozen leading environmental organizations announced the launch of “Starbucks: Break Free From Plastic” — a global campaign demanding that Starbucks take accountability for its contribution to the growing plastic pollution crisis. Sign the petition at: <https://mobilize4change.org/starbucks>.

The campaign formed ahead of Starbucks’ 2018 annual shareholder meeting, where the coffee giant is urging its [shareholders to vote “no”](#) on a [sustainability proposal by As You Sow](#). The proposal asks Starbucks to address its plastic pollution problem by developing stronger efforts to move toward sustainable packaging. [View As You Sow’s argument in favor of the proposal](#).

Starbucks fails on sustainability pledges

The campaign is being launched amidst a backdrop of corporate pledges to address plastic pollution, including from McDonald’s and Coca-Cola. The campaign is demanding firm commitments from Starbucks on how it will address its plastic pollution problem.

In 2008, Starbucks pledged to make a 100% recyclable paper cup and sell 25% of drinks in reusable cups by 2015. To date, Starbucks has failed to produce a 100% recyclable paper cup, and currently serves only 1.4% of drinks in reusable cups.

“Starbucks serves an astounding 4+ billion paper cups each year, most of which end up in the trash because their plastic lining makes them unrecyclable in most places. That’s a disgraceful amount of plastic pollution ending up in our local landfills. It’s time for Starbucks to start living up to its promises.” -Ross Hammond, Stand.earth

Starbucks plans massive global growth

Despite knowing its environmental impact, Starbucks has pledged to dramatically expand its presence in Asia in 2018 — with no plan to address its plastic waste. Because of this inaction, governments are being forced to step up. A parliamentary committee in the UK recently proposed a “latte levy” on single-use cups to help address the growing plastic pollution problem, and the City of Vancouver, BC is considering imposing a fee on unrecyclable, plastic-lined cups.

“Starbucks has pledged to open one store every 15 hours in China in 2018. CEO Kevin Johnson continues to turn a blind eye to his company’s contribution to our global plastic pollution problem even as the coffee giant continues to open stores at an astonishing pace.” -Sondhya Gupta, SumOfUs

Starbucks part of global plastic pollution problem

Starbucks cups, lids, and iconic green straws make up a visible portion of the catastrophic plastic pollution in our oceans. In the marine environment, plastics break down into small indigestible particles that birds and marine animals mistake for food, resulting in illness and death.

“Starbucks pioneered the global ‘to-go’ disposable coffee cup culture, and sends more than 4 billion plastic-lined cups to landfill every year — along with countless single-use plastic lids, straws, stirrers, and cutlery. We’re calling on Starbucks to make a commitment to reusability and stop contributing to our global plastic pollution catastrophe.” -Dianna Cohen, Plastic Pollution Coalition

“Americans use half a billion plastic straws every day. That’s an unfathomable amount. These plastic straws are consistently among the top items collected during beach cleanups. Starbucks’ green straws may be iconic, but this staggering amount of plastic pollution is simply unacceptable.” -Rachel Lincoln Sarnoff, 5 Gyres Institute

“Each minute, the equivalent of a garbage truck full of plastic ends up in the ocean, and by 2050, there is projected to be more plastic in the ocean than fish by weight. Starbucks needs to take immediate steps to #breakfreefromplastic before our global plastic pollution problem overwhelms our oceans and marine life.” -Von Hernandez, Break Free From Plastic

“Plastics are a symptom of our throw-away culture. Companies like Starbucks need to take responsibility for the harm to people and the environment that comes from irresponsible use of a material for minutes that is designed to last lifetimes. We need them to help build a culture of stewardship among consumers and businesses.” -Jamie Rhodes, UPSTREAM

The campaign is calling on Starbucks to address its plastic pollution in 5 specific ways:

- Create a 100% recyclable paper cup without a plastic lining.
- Reduce plastic pollution by eliminating single-use plastics like straws.
- Promote reusable cups and encourage customers to change their habits.
- Recycle cups and food packaging in all stores worldwide.
- Report publicly on the type and amount of plastics used in packaging.

The campaign includes 5 Gyres, Care2, Clean Water Action, CREDO, Greenpeace USA, Plastic Pollution Coalition, Stand.earth, The Story of Stuff Project, SumOfUs, Texas Campaign for the Environment, UPSTREAM, Hannah4Change, Captain Planet Foundation, Kōkua Hawai‘i Foundation, Plastik Diet Kantong, Heirs to Our Oceans, Wild at Heart Taiwan, and a variety of organizations participating under the Break Free From Plastic global movement.

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