

THE *CHAMPIONS OF THE EARTH* UNEP AWARD HAS ANNOUNCED THE FIVE WINNERS OF THE 2023 EDITION

On 30 October 2023 the [UN Environment Programme \(UNEP\)](#) have announced the [2023 Champions of the Earth 2023](#), honouring individuals and organizations whose actions have a transformative impact on the environment.

Since its inception in 2005, the annual Champions of the Earth award has been bringing visibility and validating some of the world's most dynamic environmental leaders, including pioneering scientists, captains of industry, heads of state and community activists. The award celebrates inspirational and motivational examples of the potential of individual and collective action to change the world.

Following the launch of the [UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#) (2021-2030), the editions of the award were focused on efforts to globally prevent, halt and reverse ecosystem degradation, looking for inspirational leaders able to lead the charge in actions for:

- Climate - Strengthening ecosystem resilience and halting emissions.
- Nature - Protecting what we have and restoring what we have lost.
- Pollution - Tackling waste and pollutants threatening human and ecosystem health.

In 2023, in particular, the award decided to honour innovators and initiatives that are helping to tackle [plastic pollution](#), having “[catastrophic](#)” consequences on the planet. The website highlights that plastic has transformed everyday life and provided many benefits for society, but humanity now produces around [430 million metric tons](#) of the material annually, two-thirds of which quickly becomes waste. Each year, [19-23 million tons](#) of plastic waste leaks into aquatic ecosystems, polluting lakes, rivers and seas. Research shows that, if current practices continue, plastic could emit 19 per cent of the global greenhouse gas emissions allowed under the most ambitious [Paris Agreement](#) target by 2040. Chemicals in plastic have been linked to [health problems](#) in humans. To counter this crisis, experts say the world must reduce plastic production, eliminate short-lived and single-use plastics, accelerate reuse systems, switch to environmentally friendly alternatives, improve recycling and adopt a [life-cycle approach](#) to plastic pollution. In 2023 Champions of the Earth are doing many of those things.

The following five UNEP's [Champions of the Earth 2023](#) have been selected by a team of UNEP staff and experts from a record of 2,500 nominations received from around the world:



[Blue Circle](#) - environmental initiative going ahead in the China's Zhejiang province of China has paid Zhejiang's fishers – and residents in coastal communities– to collect plastic debris, such as bags, bottles and discarded fishing nets. Since its launch, the initiative has enlisted the help of 10,240 boats and 6,300 fishers and local residents to recycle nearly 2,500 tons of plastic.



[CSIR Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, South Africa](#). develops and applies solutions to plastic pollution. The Council has also created the [#SolvePlasticsAfrica Hub](#), an open-source online platform that can help foster solutions, knowledge-sharing and collaboration between private and public sector partners across the continent.

[Ellen Mac Arthur Foundation](#). Since its creation in 2010, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation works to support for a more circular global economy focused on eliminating waste and pollution – including from plastics –promoting the reuse of products and materials, and regenerating nature. It has spearheaded global initiatives on plastics, fashion and food, while creating a [network](#) of business leaders, policymakers and academics to pilot sustainable practices.



[José Manuel Moller CEO and Founder of Algramo](#). Algramo is a social enterprise established in Santiago (Chile), working with retailers, from local shopkeepers to global brands, to encourage customers to use prefilled and refillable plastic containers for basics, such as dish soap. These household products can be bought by the gram, with consumers paying the same per unit no matter how much or how little they buy. Since 2020, Algramo customers have reused more than 900,000 pieces of packaging, keeping more than 100 tons of plastic from becoming waste.



[Josefina Belmonte. Quezon City Mayor](#). Quezon City is the Philippines' most populous city, and Belmonte has pursued a raft of policies to end plastic pollution, counter climate change and green the city. Quezon City, has focused on reducing plastic pollution, extending the life of plastic products already in circulation and banning single-use plastic bags. The City has also developed a plan to reduce its carbon emissions by 30% in 2030. It has declared a state of climate emergency to unlock spending amounting to 11–13% of the city's annual budget on programmes that mitigate the impacts of the climate crisis. There are plans to double the number of parks in the city, introduce more electric buses and almost quadruple the network of bike lanes by 2030 to fight pollution. Other green initiatives include promoting urban farming and deploying equipment that allows community farms to transform organic waste into methane gas that can be used for cooking.



UNEP highlights that people around the world are stepping forward with innovative ways to end plastic pollution and improve the health of the planet. The Champions of the Earth are leading that push, giving hope that solutions to plastic pollution exist and remind that safeguarding nature is key to achieving sustainable development.

Since the award's inception in 2005, the Champions of the Earth has recognized 116 laureates, ranging from world leaders to technology inventors. They include 27 world leaders, 70 individuals and 19 groups or organizations.



To fight the pervasive impact of pollution on society, UNEP also launched the campaign [#BeatPollution](#), a strategy for rapid, large-scale and coordinated action against air, land and water pollution. The strategy highlights the impact of pollution on climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and human health. Through science-based messaging, the campaign showcases how transitioning to a pollution-free planet is vital for future generations.

On the website, all winners of the annual Champions of the Earth Awards are presented with articles that allow readers to learn about their relevant initiatives.

To know more

[2023 Champions of the Earth](#)

[News in UNEP website-Champions of the Earth 2023](#)

[About the Champions of the Earth Award](#)

[Laureates by Year | Champions of the Earth \(unep.org\)](#)

[Champions of the Earth News and Stories \(unep.org\)](#)

[All News and Stories | Champions of the Earth \(unep.org\)](#)

[Beat Plastic Pollution campaign UNEP](#)

[Plastic Pollution report 2023 - UNEP](#)

[From Pollution to solution – UNEP 2021](#)

