



MEDIA BRIEFING

INCEPTION SEMINAR

Ocean Plastic Turned into an Opportunity in Circular Economy (OPTOCE)

Ho Chi Minh City, 4 October 2019: Around 40 participants representing the Vietnam's Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment, the Vietnam Environment Administration, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), local departments of natural resources and the environment, and representatives from industries, academia and NGOs participate in the inception seminar to mark the formal launching of the Ocean Plastic Turned into an Opportunity in Circular Economy (OPTOCE) Project. The Project is funded by the Norwegian Government through the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), and implemented by the Norwegian Foundation for Scientific and Industrial Research (SINTEF).

The Seminar spotlights Norway's Ambassador to Vietnam, Ms Grete Løchen; UNDP Resident Representative a.i., Ms. Caitlin Wiesen; UNIDO Country Representative, Ms Le Thanh Thao; and IUCN Marine and Coastal Resources Programme Coordinator, Ms Bui Thi Thu Hien.

"The Seminar is aimed at introducing the Regional OPTOCE-project, explaining about possibilities to improve the treatment of non-recyclable plastic wastes (PW) by involving energy intensive industry, particularly cement industry, and gaining insights and experiences from complementary activities going on in Vietnam", said Chief Scientist and Programme Manager of OPTOCE, Dr Kåre Helge Karstensen.

In her opening remarks, Ambassador Grete Løchen said *"Our oceans are getting more and more polluted. 80% of ocean plastics comes from land-based sources. Marine debris has become a global issue. Therefore, international action is key to addressing the most significant sources of plastic litter in the oceans. Norway and Vietnam, as ocean nations, understand better than anyone else the importance of oceans to our economy. Oceans are set as a high priority in the international cooperation agenda of the Norwegian Government. We are proud to provide funding to OPTOCE and another project, in collaboration with UNDP, to develop integrated and effective models of domestic waste and plastic management in five coastal and industrial locations of Vietnam. These two projects are very much linked to each other from the perspective of a circular economic thinking. This is a unique opportunity for us to contribute in saving our oceans"*.

At the Seminar, interested partners also present their plans to collaborate with SINTEF in OPTOCE Project and the parties discuss ways forward. It is expected that OPTOCE will finalise the final project document for submission to Norad by October 2019 so that the pilot phase can start by end of 2019.

OPTOCE (<https://optoce.no/>) is a regional Project funded by the Norwegian Government and carried out in five countries: China, India, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.

OPTOCE Project aims to reduce the release of plastic wastes to the ocean by involving local energy intensive industries in waste management and energy recovery. This will increase the waste treatment capacity in Asian countries and constitute a sustainable cost-efficient option in integrated waste management.

OPTOCE Project seeks to demonstrate new solutions for better waste management and circular economic thinking, and the feasibility of using public-private-partnerships to collect plastic wastes from polluted hot-spots, major rivers basins and beach front areas and to use the waste as a source of energy in local, energy intensive industries.

The above five countries have 3 billion people, with almost 1 billion living close to waterways, and produce 176 000-ton Plastic waste per day, or 64 million ton per year. They have insufficient waste treatment capacity, but a huge resource and energy intensive industry, like cement manufacturing, iron- and steel production and electricity generation, using enormous amounts of coal and emitting more than 30% of world CO₂. If some of this coal can be replaced by non-recyclable plastic waste, this will constitute a win-win solution – contribute to solve a plastic menace and reducing the emission of greenhouse-gases. As Project OPTOCE uses co-processing method, plants would reduce their coal consumption by recovery of wastes and non-recyclable plastics, with an energy efficiency much better than WtE plants. They are usually cost-efficient, do not produce any residues that need disposal and the emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs) are reduced compared to landfilling or waste incineration.

OPTOCE Project will work with the Vietnam Environment Administration under the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment, local DONREs, national and international organisations, and private partners to improve the public-private-partnerships to collect plastic wastes and to use the waste as a source of energy in cement plants.

Lessons learned will be shared through a regional multi-stakeholder forum enabling awareness raising, capacity building and efficient replication across the continent.

SINTEF is Europe's largest independent research organisations with the vision **Technology for a better society**. For over 60 years, SINTEF has developed solutions and innovation for society and customers all over the world covering a wide range of areas including climate and the environment, renewable energy, materials etc. SINTEF has been operating in Vietnam since 2000.

For more information: <https://www.sintef.no/en/>

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