

## **Tackling Textile Waste in the Fast Fashion Industry**

### ***Background information:***

Fast fashion is a modern term referring to clothes and fashion accessory production with its main objective being high volume production and low cost sales. Such means leave a negative impact on the environment for many reasons, some of which being air and water pollution, textile waste, production of microplastics etc. With all combined, the fast fashion industry makes up to 8% of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and is responsible for 20% of industrial water pollution.

Each year the production of fast fashion products rises by 40% whereas the global demand for clothing rises by only 2%. With that it is clear that fast fashion companies end up with a mass product surplus that doesn't sell and is disposed of even if it's never been used.

Today, synthetic fibers make up to 60% of the materials used in clothing manufacture, most of which being polyester. The vast majority of synthetic products are made from crude oil and therefore they are very difficult and expensive to recycle. The easiest way for companies to dispose of non recyclable fabric is to simply burn it or to pile it up in a garbage dump. Such solutions lead to degradation of the environment including but not limited to space occupation, disturbance of natural habitat for organisms and water intoxication.

Countries most affected by such behavior may include India, Bangladesh and other countries in southeast Asia and Middle East, since they are the biggest producers of synthetic materials. Manufacturing process of those materials often includes highly toxic chemicals that are unsafe and provided that the majority of countries producing synthetic textile are developing and don't provide stable work conditions for workers, they don't leave damage to the health of the environment but also the health of workers themselves.

Other negative impacts caused by the fast fashion industry include water waste because of cotton plantages, or the increase of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions as a consequence of export of produced commodities.

In 2015 only the cotton industry consumed 79 billion cubic meters of water.

It is predicted that by 2030 the number of greenhouse emissions produced by the fashion industry will grow by 50%.

### ***UN' involvement:***

In 2018 the United Nations founded the United Nations Alliance for Sustainable Fashion (furtherly referred to as UNASF) in reaction to the lack of coordination in tackling the problem of low fashion sustainability. Together with other UN organizations such as the ILO, UNECE, UNDP, UNFCCC and UNOP, UNASF aims to fulfill the Sustainable Development goals with the priority of the twelfth Sustainable Development goal - ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns.

The UN environment programme (UNEP) has organized an event during the 2022 COP27 conference in Egypt focusing on the importance of circular fashion systems.

In 2023 the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) published a Fashion Industry Charter on Climate Action. This charter refers to the 2015 Paris Agreement and encourages companies to reduce their impact on the climate.

### ***Questions to consider:***

- Is your country affected by the wasteful nature of the fast fashion industry? How?
- Does fast fashion play a significant role in your country's economy?
- Is the fast fashion industry a grand employer in your country?
- Has your country formed any restrictions concerning the fast fashion industry?

- What may be some manners of decreasing the fast fashion's industry's impact on the environment?
- Is your country a major consumer or producer of fast fashion products?

### ***Helpful resources:***

- [https://unfashionalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/UN-Fashion-Alliance-Mappingpt\\_Final.pdf](https://unfashionalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/UN-Fashion-Alliance-Mappingpt_Final.pdf)
- [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Patsy-Perry/publication/340635670\\_The\\_environmental\\_price\\_of\\_fast\\_fashion/links/5f2960c4a6fdcccc43a8ca65/The-environmental-price-of-fast-fashion.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Patsy-Perry/publication/340635670_The_environmental_price_of_fast_fashion/links/5f2960c4a6fdcccc43a8ca65/The-environmental-price-of-fast-fashion.pdf)
- <https://sdg12hub.org/>
- <https://www.unep.org/sustainable-fashion>
- <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2019-march-2020/battling-damaging-effects-%E2%80%98fast-fashion%E2%80%99>
- [https://media.proquest.com/media/hms/PFT/1/bXoEM?\\_s=5MVUX7CE4PPIQVqbLBomNgrogc0%3D](https://media.proquest.com/media/hms/PFT/1/bXoEM?_s=5MVUX7CE4PPIQVqbLBomNgrogc0%3D)
- <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s12940-018-0433-7>