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## UN environment chief lauds marine adventurers as they end anti-pollution voyage



Plastiki crew on arrival in Sydney

27 July 2010 – The head of the United Nations Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)), Achim Steiner, has congratulated the adventurer David de Rothschild and his crew for completing a voyage across the Pacific Ocean in a boat fashioned from recycled plastic bottles to raise awareness about pollution of the seas.

The boat, named the Plastiki, was constructed from 12,500 recycled plastic bottles. It reached Sydney Harbour in Australia yesterday after a four-month voyage that started from the United States city of San Francisco in March.

“David, you and your shipmates have achieved not only a journey but a milestone in terms of raising global awareness of human-kind's increasingly serious impact on the marine environment,” Mr. Steiner, UNEP’s Executive Director, told Mr. de Rothschild by video link from UNEP headquarters in Nairobi.

“Through the novel and inspiring design of Plastiki – with its innovative use of recycled materials – to the informative, daily blogs and tremendous media coverage, you have engaged the heads but also the hearts of millions upon millions of people,” Mr. Steiner said.

“If collectively we carry on using the seas and oceans as a dustbin, human beings will soon have turned the once beautiful and bountiful marine environment from a crucial life-support system into a lifeless one,” he added.

According to UNEP, more than 13,000 pieces of plastic litter are now floating on every square kilometre of the world’s oceans and some 8 million items of marine litter are thought to enter the oceans and seas every day, about 5 million (63 per cent) of which are solid waste thrown overboard or lost from ships.

An estimated 100,000 turtles and marine mammals, such as dolphins, whales and seals, are killed by plastic marine litter every year around the world, according to the agency.

UNEP research has also shown that more than 2 billion tons of wastewater – a cocktail of sewage, heavy metals, fertilizer, pesticides and other pollutants – are discharged into rivers, estuaries and coastal waters each year. Climate change is also beginning to acidify the seas with real threats to shellfisheries, coral reefs and the food chain.

“If society can begin to turn the tide [of sea pollution] in 2010 and beyond, then I am sure that David and the Plastiki crew will have played their part in helping humanity to chart a new and transformational course towards the low carbon, resource efficient green economy so urgently needed,” Mr. Steiner added.

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