

Roundtable on

Responsible Sourcing of Recycled Plastic

Date: 4th June 2025 | Time: 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm

Venue: We The People, UN House, New Delhi

Background

With **“Beat Plastic Pollution”** as the theme for World Environment Day 2025, there is renewed focus on transforming how plastic is produced, consumed, and managed. A critical part of this transformation involves strengthening supply chain accountability—particularly through responsible sourcing practices that promote traceability, inclusion, and sustainability in the use of recycled plastics.

A broader look at responsible sourcing defines it as ensuring that materials and services are obtained in a sustainable, ethical, and transparent manner. It requires that businesses take into account environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors across their supply networks. It calls on governments to establish clear policies, enforce regulations, and create enabling environments that support responsible sourcing practices. It requires recyclers to adopt best practices that ensure environmental safety, product quality, and efficient material recovery. It involves waste-picker collectives in formalizing their roles, improving working conditions, and ensuring fair and decent livelihoods within the value chain. It engages other partners—such as civil society organizations and industry associations—to foster collaboration, capacity building, and transparency throughout the system.

In the context of plastics—and particularly recycled plastic—responsible sourcing is critical. With global efforts underway to curb plastic pollution and accelerate the transition towards a circular economy, there is increasing pressure to incorporate recycled plastic content into packaging, consumer goods, and industrial products. However, in many countries—including India—the collection, sorting, and processing of plastic waste is still largely dependent on the informal sector, where social safeguards and environmental protections are often inadequate. Even within formal structures, limitations in capacity, resources, and sustained oversight can pose challenges to ensuring traceability, quality, and ethical sourcing of recycled plastic.

In such contexts, the absence of robust responsible sourcing practices can contribute to systemic issues such as child labour, low wages, inadequate occupational health and safety, exclusion of informal waste workers, environmental degradation from unsafe processing and disposal, and limited traceability and quality assurance. Embedding responsible sourcing principles into the value chain for recycled plastics can help address these gaps and build more ethical, transparent and resilient systems.

Furthermore, responsible sourcing can serve as **meaningful extension of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** framework. It can promote ethical, transparent, and traceable supply chains that align with compliance mandates, material recovery goals, the inclusion of informal waste workers and broader compliance goals. It can also enhance better coordination among producers, recyclers, and waste management entities, fostering compliance not just with recycling targets but with overall sustainability and social responsibility goals. This integrated approach can lead to improved data reporting, better risk management, and ultimately a more resilient and trustworthy circular economy ecosystem.

Objective of the Roundtable

To advance this dialogue, UNDP India, in partnership with FICCI under the 'RECEIC Knowledge Series', is convening a multi-stakeholder roundtable on Wednesday, 4th June 2025, from 3:00 to 5:00 PM IST.

The session will bring together representatives from government, industry, and civil society to explore practical pathways for mainstreaming responsible sourcing in recycled plastics value chain. It will also support the ongoing efforts of RECEIC working groups, particularly those focussed on **packaging** and **informal sector integration**. The **Resource Efficiency & Circular Economy Industry Coalition (RECEIC)** was launched in 2023 during India's G20 presidency to enhance resource efficiency and accelerate circular transitions across industry sectors through collaborative action and innovation. **FICCI** serves as its secretariat and **UNDP India** is working as a knowledge partner.

Learning Outcomes

The roundtable will facilitate open and inclusive dialogue around the following shared themes, inviting reflections and actionable insights from all participants:

1. Shared Understanding of a Responsible Sourcing Framework

What constitutes responsible sourcing in the context of recycled plastics? What common principles, benchmarks, or indicators can guide stakeholders across sectors?

2. Strengthening Traceability and Quality Assurance for Responsible Sourcing

How can traceability and quality assurance be strengthened across the recycled plastics value chain to ensure material integrity, transparency, and social safeguards? What systems or standards can help verify recycled content, uphold ethical sourcing, and promote the inclusion of informal actors?

3. Financial Considerations for Responsible Sourcing

What are the key financial enablers and cost implications of integrating responsible sourcing in the recycled plastics value chain? How can incentives, investments, or market mechanisms support ethical and sustainable practices, especially among informal and small-scale actors?

4. Building Capacity for Responsible Sourcing Across the Value Chain

What skills and institutional support are needed to enable responsible sourcing across stakeholders in the recycling value chain? How can capacity-building efforts be designed to include informal actors and promote consistent, ethical practices?