

<b>FORUM:</b>	Environment Commission
<b>ISSUE:</b>	Measures to Alleviate Damages Arising from Fast Fashion and Textile Waste
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<b>POSITION:</b>	President of Environment Commission

## Introduction

What is fast fashion, and how does it influence the environment? Fast fashion refers to clothing production that aims to produce an immense amount of affordable clothing at a rapid rate. In the process of production, it uses low-quality materials in order to make the products affordable for its buyers. At first, fast fashion might seem innovative and seem to serve as a helpful solution for citizens. Surprisingly,



*The Growth of Fast Fashion*

recent findings proved that fast fashion served as one of the greatest causes of today's environmental problems.

Textile wastes are substances that are no longer used after any production process of textile materials. According to statistics from the IUCN, it is found that the world produces almost 92 million tons of textile waste every year. These wastes can be produced from production processes such as spinning, weaving, knitting, clothing, etc.

From these processes, the main source of textile waste is from disposed clothing. When people discard clothing, it takes a minimum of 200 years for the clothing material to become decomposed. When the clothing gets decomposed, the textiles inside the fabric produce toxic chemicals that eventually get released into the underground surface.

## Background

Clothing is not considered a simple piece of fabric that only helps maintain human body temperatures anymore. It has now developed into a style that people utilize to express themselves on



different occasions. As more people became interested in what they wore, fashion industries automatically became some of the highest-ranking job markets around the world. However, not all can afford some of the finest-looking clothing. This is how fast fashion rose to the surface.

Fast fashion was welcomed by mainstream consumers because it allowed them to purchase the latest trend clothing at an affordable price. The process became even more popular because of its fast production and speedy shipping methods. Despite potential environmental dangers, in order to catch up on trends, people, especially young ones, choose to benefit from fast fashion.

## Problems Raised

### *Polluting Water Sources*

Researchers have found that textile wastes dry up and pollute water sources such as rivers and streams. When clothes get thrown out by people, they take a considerably long time to decompose into their original materials. Clothing that is made from textile materials will eventually decompose into



*Fast Fashion in Rivers*

textile substances. These decomposed wastes will eventually find their way into the earth's surface and way down to the water sources.

During the production of clothing, industries often dye textiles. This becomes another big cause of water pollution since the leftover water from the dyeing textile process is usually thrown into water sources such as streams or rivers that flow to larger water sources.

### *Overuse of Water Resources*

The fashion industries all around the world produce large amounts of clothing each day. Water is one of the most prominent resources to manufacture cloth. Among all industries, the fashion industry is noticed as the second largest consumer of water using about 700 gallons of water to produce one cotton shirt. If a larger piece of clothing is being made, it would require a few thousand gallons.

According to the One Drop Foundation, about 2 billion people lack safe water at home, and about 144 million people drink water directly from a surrounding water source such as rivers, lakes, or canals.



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## *Microplastic Pollution*

Another problem that could be raised from the material used to produce clothing is the consumption of specific synthetic fibers such as polyester, nylon, and acrylic. These materials, known as microplastics, are known for their resistance. Multiple pieces of research have proven that these synthetic



*Microplastic in Oceans*

fibers that fashion industries use take about hundreds of years to completely decompose. In addition, it is estimated by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) that of all the small pieces of microplastics in the ocean, about 35 percent of them are synthetic textiles that are often used to create human clothing. Not only do these small particles affect the environment, but they also affect the biodiversity in the surroundings. One example of how they could influence

biodiversity is that some animals might misunderstand the particles as other food sources. After the animals consume these toxic chemicals, they might face illnesses or even worse, death.

## *Overuse of Energy*

Clothing is not produced only with the materials. It also needs the usage of energy and technology to be able to get its shape. It takes quite a lot of energy to create cloth. For example, petroleum is required in the manufacturing process, which releases multiple toxic chemicals into the air. These chemicals include volatile particulate matter and acids like hydrogen chloride. Not only that, in order to produce cotton, which is a major ingredient of cloth manufacturing, requires pesticides.

## **International Actions**

### *Creation of Alliance for Sustainable Fashion*

In order to reduce the impact of fast fashion on the environment, the United Nations has created an initiative of agencies and allied organizations called the Alliance for Sustainable Fashion. The included agencies and organizations work to support the connection between the United Nations and other fashion industries, promote projects, and publicize policies to create sustainable fashion. The





objectives of the alliances are promoting active collaboration, knowledge sharing, strengthening synergies, outreach, and advocacy.

### *African Businesses (NKWO, Suave Kenya, Ahluwalia)*

NKWO, Suave Kenya, and Ahluwalia are clothing industries in Africa. These businesses are giving action in order to create changes to the current producing method that creates excessive textile waste. NKWO is known to have a commitment to the idea of zero waste. They also created a new type of textile which uses a modernized method of weaving to create clothing out of bits left from clothes that were going to be disposed. Suave Kenya decided to use as little textiles as possible and alter them into different types of products, which could show how previously used textiles can be recycled into other objects. Ahluwalia uses natural and recycled materials to create their clothing.



*Increasing Cloth in Oceans*

## **Key Players**

### *International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)*

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is a union of governments and organizations that are willing to help life and livelihoods. They provide various organizations with information and knowledge, also some tools that might be needed. Their main focuses are biodiversity, economics, climate change, water security, governance, ocean, nature-based solutions, and land use.

Since the impact of fast fashion is wide ranged, it affects all air, ground, and water. This organization will focus on these environmental problems and help seek solutions to solve the problems caused by fast fashion methods.

### *Ethical Fashion Initiative (ITC)*

The Ethical Fashion Initiative (ITC) is an established program of the International Trade Center, which is a cooperated agency between the United Nations (UN) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Their purpose is to come up with sustainable development in economies through trade in the



fashion and textile industries. Throughout the years, they have worked with various designers who are related to the fashion industry and discussed possible solutions to the given problem. They work with artisans in different fields to produce a well-structured network and social works. Additionally, they are highly interested and concerned in maintaining social and environmental sustainability.

## Possible Solutions

### *Slow fashion*

Slow fashion is the opposite of fast fashion. This production method encompasses an awareness and approach to fashion that carefully considers the processes and resources required to make clothing. Some characteristics include high quality, lower-impact materials, sold in smaller stores, often made right after order



*Slow Fashion*

to reduce unneeded products. Slow fashion is getting more developed currently and predictions show that if more fashion industries and customers rely on this production method, it might be able to completely replace fast fashion.

Slow fashion helps the environment in many ways. This production method focuses on utilizing sustainable and organic materials, recyclable fabrics, and minimizing water usage. Contrasting to fast fashion, slow fashion creates fewer toxic chemicals that are harmful to the environment.

Clothing made from slow fashion method also has many advantages. These clothes usually last much longer than fast fashion products since it uses higher quality materials and construction techniques to manufacture them. However, one concern of slow fashion products is that since these products are often made by local artisans without help from much technology, they are more expensive than fast fashion products.

### *Using recycled, sustainable materials*

The current materials that are used to create clothing are highly harmful to the environment. Therefore, clothing industries should start finding replaceable materials that are eco-friendly. These materials could be pineapple leather, wool, linen, sustainable cotton, lyocell, and other natural fibers.



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If most clothing industries replace their current materials with these natural materials, environmental pollution will significantly decrease since a big portion of some environmental problems are caused by fast fashion production methods.

## **Glossary**

### *Fast Fashion*

Inexpensive clothing produced rapidly by mass-market retailers in response to the latest trends.

### *Textile Waste*

The material that is discarded throughout the production process such as spinning, weaving, dyeing, finishing, and even after the product is made.

### *Pesticide*

A substance used for destroying insects or other organisms harmful to cultivated plants or to animals.

### *Slow Fashion*

The opposite of fast fashion; production which encompasses an awareness and approach to fashion that carefully considers the processes and resources required to make clothing.

### *Lyocell*

A strong synthetic fiber made from reconstituted cellulose, used in carpets and in apparel when blended with other fibers.

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