



## EU Member States asked to deliver final decisive effort for Europe to break free from single-use plastic bags

**Only 4 months away from the transposition deadline of the EU Plastic bags directive, environmental NGOs celebrate today the 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the International Plastic Bag Free Day. 2016 is a pivotal year which will pave the way towards what NGOs hope, a European plastic bag free future.**

EU governments have until the end of November to adopt national legislative measures to drastically reduce the use of single-use plastic carrier bags. While many initiatives have popped up locally, some Member States are still lagging behind in engaging in the fight against plastic bag pollution. At the same time, some EU countries such as Italy and France already have, or are planning bans on plastic bags and are paving the way ahead.

More than 100 billion bags are used annually in Europe and most end up in landfills, incinerators or as litter in aquatic environments. In addition to harming the marine environment, producing these bags requires millions of barrels of oil per year. Moreover, plastic bags can take centuries to degrade and are responsible, together with other litter items, for the deaths of an estimated 100,000 marine mammals every year.

The International Plastic Bag Free Day, celebrated over the World on July 3rd, is a unique occasion for Fundació Prevenió de Residus, together with NGOs Surfrider Foundation Europe and Zero Waste Europe, and the undersigned organisations to spread the word that a plastic bag free world is possible and that sound environmental alternatives to single use plastic bags are available.

NGOs ask governments to show ambition and caution, recalling that paper bags and biodegradable bags remain single use options and should be avoided. They call on the European Commission to speed up the two reports promised in the Plastic Bags directive on very-lightweight and oxo-degradable plastic bags, as they are still far too common in the European market. Oxo-degradable bags, in particular, have proven to be extremely harmful for the marine environment, as they break into small pieces impossible to remove.



European citizens expect national governments to seize this opportunity for action. NGOs too call on governments to set an example, and take ambitious action: ***“We are glad that more and more regions, municipalities and Member States are taking on what Italy has started in 2011 with its ban on single use bags. It is now time for all EU Member States to take their responsibilities and stop the plastic bag flow – whether they are used as carrier bags or for the transport of fruits and vegetables- into the environment and eventually into the Ocean”.***

**More information:**

[www.plasticbagfreeday.org](http://www.plasticbagfreeday.org)

[www.surfrider.eu/en/ban-the-bag](http://www.surfrider.eu/en/ban-the-bag)

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