



Photo: World Cosplay Culture Promotion Association

Participants in the Cosplay for Zero Marine Litter Campaign held in Yokohama in September 2023

# Working Towards Zero Marine Litter While Enjoying Cosplay

Marine litter continues to increase worldwide<sup>1</sup>. In Japan, various activities are being conducted for reducing marine litter, which is damaging the global environment. We spoke with the organizer of a unique event where participants engage in cleanup activities while enjoying cosplay. (Text: TANAKA Nozomi)



Photo: World Cosplay Cultural Development Association

Participants dressed as popular manga and anime characters at the Cosplay for Zero Marine Litter Campaign held in Fukuoka City in June 2024



Photo: World Cosplay Cultural Development Association

Participants dressed as popular manga and anime characters pick up litter in the streets during the 2024 Cosplay for Zero Marine Litter Campaign.

**T**AKEYARI Kyohei, from the World Cosplay Cultural Development Association, which aims to revitalize regions through cosplay culture, explains, “Among cosplayers<sup>2</sup> who immerse themselves in characters from manga, anime, games, and more, many take the lead in picking up litter to ensure they don’t pollute locations used for photography for their own social media posts. We collaborate with cosplayers who have such high environmental awareness and social media influence to actively engage in reducing marine litter.”

In Japan, since 2019, The Nippon Foundation<sup>3</sup> and the Ministry of the Environment have jointly estab-

lished Zero Marine Litter Week, during which nationwide cleanup activities are promoted twice a year, in spring and autumn. In 2024, Zero Marine Litter Week is scheduled from May 30 to June 9, and again from September 20 to 29. Many organizations participate in these weeks, including groups like TAKEYARI’s organization, which conducts an event called ‘Cosplay for Zero Marine Litter Campaign’ and operates it as the organizing committee. In 2024, the event was held in Fukuoka City on June 1. Approximately 400 cosplayers from across the country gathered in the bustling streets of Fukuoka, collecting around 90 liters of trash, equivalent to about 19 bags.

“In fact, about 80% of marine litter flows into the ocean from land through rivers. That’s why we not only focus on coastal areas but also actively engage in organizing litter-picking events in urban areas. For the Cosplay for Zero Marine Litter Campaign in Fukuoka City, a pioneering initiative took place with simultaneous cleanup events held in Busan, South Korea, and Cebu Island in the Philippines. Participants from each location connected and interacted via online streaming. In recent years, along the coast of Fukuoka Prefecture, marine litter has been increasingly drifting in



Cosplay de UMI-GOMI ZERO feat. BLUE SANTA in Indonesia. The event is held at Christmas time overseas.

Photo: World Cosplay Cultural Development Association

from overseas. So, we have not only limited our efforts to Japan but also reached out to neighboring countries to encourage their participation,” explains TAKEYARI.

Participants expressed joy in connecting with overseas cosplayers through litter picking and voiced hopes for the broader expansion of combining cosplay with cleanup efforts.

In addition to the Cosplay for Zero Marine Litter Campaign, there is another event related to Zero Marine Litter Week called Blue Santa<sup>4</sup>, which aims to enhance environmental awareness and express gratitude to the ocean on Marine Day<sup>5</sup> in July. TAKEYARI’s committee collaborates with overseas cosplayers to organize the event, Cosplay de UMI-GOMI ZERO feat. BLUE SANTA, combining Blue Santa and the Cosplay for Zero Marine Litter Campaign. This event is also held internationally, and involves cosplayers dressed in blue attire, known as ‘Blue Santas,’ picking up marine litter with the aim of presenting clean seas as a gift to children.

“Moving forward, I want to continue our efforts to leave behind rich and beautiful seas for the next generation, while also promoting cosplay culture,” says TAKEYARI.

The world is interconnected by the oceans. Cooperation on a global scale is essential to ensure that future generations inherit beautiful seas. Japan’s cosplay culture plays a role in uniting these thoughts and actions. **■**

1. Marine litter refers to the collective term for washed-up litter on coastlines, drifting litter on the sea surface and underwater, and litter accumulated on the seabed. The majority of this litter is plastic. According to the Ministry of the Environment, at least eight million tons of plastic waste flow into the ocean every year globally, adversely affecting marine life and causing severe environmental issues.
2. Cosplay refers to the practice of dressing up as characters from manga, anime, games, and other media for fun. People who engage in cosplay are called cosplayers.
3. A public interest incorporated foundation that engages in social contribution activities by collaborating with people from various backgrounds, regardless of race or nationality. It was established as a foundation in 1962.
4. In Japan’s Blue Santa event, general participants wear blue clothing and pick up litter. In 2023, the main venue was Enoshima in Fujisawa City, Kanagawa Prefecture, where approximately 2,000 people took part.
5. A Japanese national holiday observed annually on the third Monday of July to express gratitude for the blessings of the sea.



At the event venue where the opening ceremony and other activities were held, participants interacted online with the Cebu Island venue in the Philippines, which was held simultaneously.

Photo: World Cosplay Cultural Development Association



Picking up marine litter in Busan, South Korea

Photo: World Cosplay Cultural Development Association