Unilever, a sponsor of climate conference COP26, debuts in the top three plastic polluters, joining Coke and Pepsi which have been sitting in the top spots for four consecutive years.

Consumer goods giants Coca-Cola, Pepsico, and Unilever emerged as the world's biggest plastic polluters, according to an annual survey of plastic debris found on city streets, parks, forests, beaches, and coastal areas around the world.

Coca-Cola and Pepsico have topped the global plastic polluter audit, conducted by a network of environmental groups running cleanup operations for the fourth year in a row, but it is the first time for Unilever to claim the third spot.

The plethora of plastic littering the planet continues despite efforts by the three firms to recover and remove from the environment the same amount of plastic waste they have created.

Coca-Cola, whose plastic items where more than the next two top polluters combined, committed to collect one bottle for every one sold by 2030. Pepsico vowed to halve its use of virgin plastic by 2030, while Unilever made the same pledge to be achieved by 2025.

The report called Unilever's rise in the ranking an "egregious development" as the company is serving as principal sponsor for next week's climate talks at the 26th Conference of Parties (COP) in Glasgow, Scotland.

For climate campaigners, it is worrying that these companies are the same that spend millions or billions in an attempt to fool the public through their false claims on plastic neutrality. Such actions provide little to no benefit in the people's fight against the plastic crisis.

It is said instead, they're causing further destruction as they resort to harmful methods, such as waste-to-energy incineration and co-processing," Chua added.