

DRAFT OPTIONS (REV 1.)

The Experts of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Expert Group established by the fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly pursuant to resolution UNEP/EA/3/7 (operative paragraph 10) met in Nairobi from 29 to 31 May and in Geneva from 3 to 7 December 2018 to further examine the barriers to and options for combating marine plastic litter and microplastics from all sources, especially land-based sources, and provide options for continued work to the Environmental Assembly at its fourth session.

In addition to the mandate for their work in UNEA resolution 3/7, as a starting point for their work the experts considered the assessment “Combatting marine plastic litter and microplastics: an assessment of the effectiveness of relevant international regional and sub-regional governance strategies and approaches – a summary for policy makers” presented at the third session of the Environment Assembly, in December 2017 (UNEP/EA.3/INF./5). They also considered the summary report on barriers, which outlined possible response options and priority areas of action for the implementation of governance options (UNEP/AHEG/2018/2/2).

Various views were expressed during workshops and plenary meetings by the experts, including representatives of States, civil society and the private sector, on the science-based evidence of the impacts of marine litter and microplastics on human health and the environment, and on the options for addressing such impacts in the most effective and sustainable way, taking into account the interests of all concerned and affected.

The reports of the first and second meetings contain more detailed information on the various discussions and can be found at [link to be added].

The experts stressed the importance of reducing the impact of marine litter and microplastics on our oceans, marine and coastal environment and on coastal communities, human health and economies.

Given that a plethora of activities are already carried out with regard to marine litter and microplastics by many stakeholders and under the existing governance frameworks, the experts noted the usefulness of exploring the potential of those frameworks to contribute in a more comprehensive fashion in addressing concerns relating to marine litter and microplastics within their respective mandates. Many experts also noted that an effective response to the issue of marine litter and microplastics would require a new legally binding agreement.

There is a need to eliminate marine litter and microplastics from land- and sea-based sources through a holistic and evidence-based approach considering the full life-cycle to move to resource-efficient and circular management of plastic, avoiding leakage.

Prevention is paramount and is the priority; it is also critical to address legacy marine litter and microplastics already in the environment.

There is an urgent need for action as our capacity to recycle plastic waste and manage plastic waste streams is limited because of design and certain additives and outstripped by the production and consumer demand for plastic due to, jeopardizing the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal target 14.1 “by 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution” as well as other relevant targets such as 12.4 on the sound management of chemicals and waste and 3.9 on health.

Potential options for continued work

Information and Monitoring

The experts agreed that there was a need to strengthen the science/policy interface at the international level and to do more to support evidence-based approaches, improve understanding of the impacts of plastic litter on the marine environment, and promote local, national, regional and global action on eliminating marine litter. The following options were proposed:

1. Consider modalities for the establishment of a global knowledge hub which could inter alia develop harmonized monitoring methodologies, to collect, collate and openly share global monitoring data and information from all actors and sources including citizen science; identify and support capacity-building needs and opportunities for e.g. developing countries, small island developing states and local communities; ensure access to robust, reliable science and sound scientific practices, such as on additives; guidelines for the sampling and analysis of marine macro-plastics and microplastics; identify demonstration projects and linkages with regional activities; and map out actors, initiatives and approaches. The knowledge hub could also initiate activities serve as a source of, and clearinghouse for, national source inventories, improved waste management practices, and assessment, as well as

conceptual and practical guidance materials to support governments, organizations, and private entities in addressing aspects of marine litter prevention and environmentally sound and risk-based recovery;

2. Consider the establishment of a scientific and technical advisory group on marine litter and microplastics, benefiting from the work of existing mechanisms such as Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection to for example:
3. Consider the establishment of a forum for governments, industry, academia, civil society, and other stakeholders to share experiences and coordinate action, on a regular or ad hoc basis;
4. Explore an interagency examination of health and environmental aspects in relation to marine litter and microplastics and plastic with a source to sea approach as well as an examination of cost-benefits in relation to job transition;
5. Prepare a compendium of existing and planned industry initiatives including on Extended Producer responsibility, (EPR), product design, standards, innovating, production quantities, additives, to enhance transparency and calibrate partnership opportunities as well as examples of existing national level actions that can supplement the compendium.

Coordination and Governance

The experts discussed various options and approaches for enhanced coordination and governance. A number of options were considered and are described in the report of the meeting and its annexes. The experts group identified a number of guiding principles which included: responses to the problem of marine litter and microplastics should be aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals. Political will is essential for effective outcomes. Information and research are critical enablers. A circular economy approach should be promoted. The overall approach should be: Comprehensive and holistic; Transparent; Evidence-based. It should incorporate: Sea-based and land-based sources; The circular economy; The full life-cycle approach. It should target: Elimination and prevention of plastic waste and marine litter; Immediate as well as sustained, long-term action. It should be supported by and grounded in: A science/policy interface; International cooperation; Multi-stakeholder engagement; Realities of differences in regional and local contexts and (technical/financial) capacities.

The following options are proposed but are not mutually exclusive and could be explored in parallel:

1. Consider strengthening coordination at the global level through existing partnerships and mechanisms working on marine litter and related issues, such as the Global Partnership on Marine Litter and the the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) and to broaden their scope; and if necessary consider the feasibility and effectiveness of a potential new coordinating structure building on existing initiatives.
2. Improve coordination between global and regional level notably with existing international instruments such as Regional Seas Programmes, Regional Fisheries Bodies, and river-basin committees;
3. Encourage new and enhance existing forms of financing and technical support to developing countries and small island developing states; assist governments and other entities to access available resources from a variety of sources for marine litter activities;
4. Consider the feasibility and effectiveness of a potential international legally binding agreement on marine litter and microplastics;
5. Establish an interim coordinating structure to ensure effective follow up to UNEA 4 outcomes in relation to the request in paragraph 10 of UNEA resolution 3/7 and the above.