

Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions

1. The Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal covers many issues which are at the heart of preventing and minimizing the generation of wastes including those ending up in the ocean. Much of the marine litter and microplastics found in the sea may be determined as 'waste' as defined under the Convention, although not all will necessarily fall within the definition.
2. The Convention is a legally binding instrument, has almost universal membership, and is comprehensive in its approach for those waste streams which fall within its scope. Its central provisions concern the control of transboundary movements, and marine litter is a transboundary issue as defined in paragraph 3 of Article 2. It also provides that Parties shall take the appropriate measures to ensure that the generation of hazardous wastes and other wastes within it is reduced to a minimum, taking into account social, technological and economic aspects, and that each Party shall take the appropriate measures to ensure the availability of adequate disposal facilities, for the environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes and other wastes, that shall be located, to the extent possible, within it, whatever the place of their disposal, as called for in paragraph 2 of Article 4 of the Convention.
3. The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) aims to protect human health and the environment from POPs, i.e. organic chemicals that persist in the environment, bioaccumulate in humans and wildlife, have harmful effects and have the potential for long-range environmental transport. As of 2018, the Convention controls 28 POPs, including those which have been used as additives, flame retardants or plasticizers in plastics. Plastics can adsorb POPs such as PCB, DDT and dioxins and these are frequently detected in marine plastic litter.
4. Resolution 3/7 of the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, on marine litter and microplastics, called on international and regional organizations and conventions including, among others, the Basel and the Stockholm conventions, as appropriate within their mandates, to increase their action to prevent and reduce marine litter and microplastics and their harmful effects, and coordinate where appropriate to achieve this end.
5. At the 2017 meeting, the Conferences of the Parties to the Basel and Stockholm conventions, in their decisions BC-13/11 and SC-8/15 respectively, encouraged interested regional and coordinating centres of the conventions to work on the impact of plastic waste, marine plastic litter, microplastics and measures for prevention and environmentally sound management.
6. The Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention also included activities related to marine plastic litter and microplastics in the work programme of the Open-ended Working Group for the biennium 2018–2019 set out in the annex to decision BC-13/17. The activities, subject to the availability of resources, were as follows:
 - (a) To consider relevant options available under the Convention to further address marine plastic litter and microplastics, taking into account, inter alia, the assessment requested by the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme in its resolution 2/11, any relevant resolution by the Environment Assembly at its forthcoming third session and existing guidance documents and activities under the Basel Convention that address issues related to marine plastic litter and microplastics; and
 - (b) To develop a proposal for possible further action, within the scope of the Convention and avoiding duplication with activities relating to the matter in other forums, for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its fourteenth meeting.
7. Following the meeting, the Secretariat has initiated activities related to marine plastic litter and microplastics. The Secretariat has compiled information on initiatives related to marine plastic litter and microplastics relevant to the Basel Convention and has made it available on the website of the Convention (<http://www.basel.int/tabid/6068/Default.aspx>) and has continued to participate in the activities of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter of the United Nations Environment Programme including in its webinars.
8. The Secretariat is preparing a report on possible options available under the Basel Convention to further address marine plastic litter and microplastics for consideration by the Open-ended Working Group of the Basel Convention at its eleventh meeting in September 2018, thanks to generous financial support provided by the Government of Norway. The report, including a list of possible further actions on marine plastic litter and microplastics, will be published on the Convention website (<http://www.basel.int/tabid/6258/Default.aspx>) and will be made available to the meeting of the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics in Nairobi in May 2018.