

Format of the Position Paper

All relevant Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans are invited to submit a concise position paper. The submissions may include the following elements:

1. Name of your organization: Tehran Convention Interim Secretariat

2. Your views on major barriers to combatting marine litter and microplastics

In the Caspian context marine litter levels are already problematic and growing in some parts of the Caspian Sea. Nevertheless, no regional action has yet been taken towards solving this problem. National actions have also been not well targeted and appear to be insufficient. According to the marine litter strategy which was developed in 2014 the main reasons are:

- Insufficient targeted laws and regulations on marine litter prevention, control or mitigation at regional, national or sub-ordinal level
- Absence of national organizations or institutions specifically tasked to deal with marine pollution
- Lack of a Regional Coordinating Unit specifically tasked to manage the Caspian Sea marine litter issues
- Insufficient number of marine litter experts and researchers in the region
- Lack of specific policies on marine litter prevention, control or mitigation at regional, national or sub-ordinal level
- Lack of economic instruments to prevent the polluters to pollute
- Insufficient enforcement capacity and inadequate compliance measures at regional, national and coastal levels
- Lack of monitoring/assessment

The cross sectoral character of the issue of marine litter can be also regarded rather as an obstacle than boon. The need for a coordinated action from various ministries and private sector industries could potentially be very difficult to overcome. The Caspian marine litter strategy also highlighted the need of involvement and engagement of all key stakeholders. It further states that marine litter management cannot be limited to the coastal areas alone and should have a much wider geographical coverage and broader institutional cooperation.

In addition, the solution to the more efficient waste management differs depending on the region given its current waste management infrastructure and capacities. Consequently, there is no universal solution to the problem and the local context must be duly taken into account. In the Caspian region the inefficiency and inconsistency in waste management system and inappropriate disposal of waste results in high volumes of litter in the marine and coastal environment.

The short term financial benefits of use of plastic in current economic system do not provide incentives for a shift to phasing out or banning the single use plastic or low quality plastic. Moreover, the economic loss caused by marine litter is relatively difficult to gauge. What is more, the attribution of the economic loss caused by marine litter to the polluter appears to be impossible.

Lastly, the lack of scientific information on the effects of the plastic pollution on both ecosystems health and human well-being could also hinder behavioral change of population needed to decrease the demand for plastic. In the Caspian context not much quantitative information is available on the volume,

distribution, composition and other aspects of marine litter. Due to lack of research on this topic, it is difficult to assess the economic damages associated with the marine litter impacts on the ecosystem, human health, recreational & leisure, agriculture and animal husbandry, fishery industry or military navigation

3. Your views on potential national, regional and international response options and associated environmental, social and economic costs

Responding to the issue of marine litter can be done from various angles. Governments, private sector, public, in particular coastal communities, NGOs and international organizations have a role to play in the fight against the marine litter. A fragmented response to this issue will not give the result that we should all opt for.

The international response should focus on, among others, gathering the momentum by raising awareness of the issue, setting up global regulatory framework, establishing partnerships with global key players and developing policy recommendation and toolkits. The Caspian marine litter strategy lists the selected international regulatory measures related to marine pollution. It does not make any reference to the others above mention focus areas of the international response.

In the framework of the regional seas the emphasis should be drawn on advocating for regional measures to address the transboundary problems in a coherent way, such as implementation of the Protocol against Pollution from Land-based Sources and Activities, since 80 % of the total marine pollution has its origin on the land. The Caspian marine litter strategy emphasizes that the issue of marine litter management should find an appropriate place in the provisions of a protocol to the Convention namely the Land based Sources of Pollution Protocol, which was developed and adopted on the later stage. In addition, the main role of the regional bodies should be in assisting with the implementation of the regional regulatory frameworks, mobilizing additional recourses and establishing partnerships for its implementation.

The most crucial is the response which comes from the national and local level. The overall goal of the above mentioned global and regional efforts should be aiming at supporting and enhancing the national endeavors. The central and the local governments need to be empowered and adequately equipped to implement measures enabling a tangible change. In doing so, a subsidiarity principle should be applied. The Caspian marine litter strategy describes quite thoroughly existing institutional arrangements and regularity settings on the national level targeting the marine pollution as well as the previous activities undertaken at the national level. It provides also list of main reasons of poor management of the marine pollution, however it does not list recommendation to address them.

4. Your views on the feasibility and effectiveness of different response options

It would appear that an effective implementation of the LBS Protocols is the most appropriate way to address the issue of the marine pollution. Strengthening the institutions and capacities of both regional and national bodies would allow for a continuity in efforts coping with marine litter. It would also enable to tackling the marine litter issue from the regional context.

Campaigns promoting public participations in addressing the marine litter issues seem to be an effective response option. Involvement of the public and giving them more opportunities to actively participate in addressing the marine litter may trigger establishment of wide arrays of partnerships and securing the resources needed to prevent and reduce marine litter.

Responses undertaken or to be undertaken in the regional context in the Caspian Sea

The Caspian Sea Day celebration taking place around 12 August, provides the umbrella for a stronger participation of the public in the actions addressing the environmental challenges. Traditionally, the beach cleanups as well as awareness raising activities, in particular among the children and adolescents were carried out. This year the Caspian Sea Day will be devoted to the marine litter. To this end, various range of activities will be held such as beach cleanup, fishery for litter and thematic roundtable discussion on marine litter.

Under the CleanSeas campaign a short movie alerting the Caspian stakeholders of the issue of plastic pollution is to be developed. The movie will be shot in the Caspian littoral country/ies. It will be produced in a way to show the marine litter issue "closer" and relevant to Caspian communities using the emotional side of the people and their memory of the place where they live. The movie will, further not contain any verbal message, so it could be easily understandable by vast audience regardless their language background. Lastly, the movie could be also used for the purposes of the other regional seas campaign given its envisaged universality.

In order to address the issue of the marine litter on the regional level and consequently, enhance the work carried out at the national level few possible opportunities were identified. A dialogue with one of the Tehran Convention Parties, Russian Federation was initiated to ensure extra budgetary funding via the Official Development Assistance of Russian Federation. The potential project is at the early stage of its design and is being envisaged to be a joint one together with the UNDP. Another possible partnership is being explored to draw additional resources to tackle the marine litter in the Caspian. Under the recently established partnership with the Coca-Cola, a project aiming at developing and endorsing of the Caspian Marine Litter Action Plan was submitted.