

Ad Hoc Open-Ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics

French Authorities Position Paper

1. Name of your organization

France

2. General comments

France would like to thank the Secretariat for the opportunity to submit a position paper ahead of the *ad hoc* Open-ended Expert Group Meeting.

Given the numerous reports produced by UNEP, Regional Seas programs and the European Commission (see Annexe 1.), France suggests that UNEP analyses these and other relevant studies and information available, as a basis for the background documents addressing the issues highlighted in the Programme of work for this meeting, rather than based on the views or positions of States at this stage. In particular, the report “Combating marine plastic litter and micro-plastics: An assessment of the effectiveness of relevant international, regional and subregional governance strategies and approaches” prepared for UNEA 3 should serve as one of the main basis for the discussions in the group.

2. Your view on major barriers to combating marine litter and microplastics.

France can share some of its knowledge and thoughts on marine litter and microplastics issues. France would like to highlight that 80% of the waste intentionally or accidentally dumped in the marine environment is land-based: consumption products, industries, open landfills, etc. The rest is mainly due to marine activities (shipping, recreational boating, fishing...). Pathways, like rivers or urban waste waters, could also represent significant inputs of waste ending up in the sea, in particular for microplastics. In any case, plastic waste constitutes the vast majority of the waste found at sea.

This plastic breaks down and invades ecosystems and the food chain but does not disappear. Its use for a single use therefore constitutes an economic and ecological aberration. And, it is not infinitely recyclable and loses quality with each recycling. It is high time we turn off the tap.

Several barriers could be identified when it comes to preventing or reducing this source of marine pollution:

- Absence of a dedicated global governance platform to address plastic marine litter issues and lack of integration and/or coherence of this issue in the relevant existing MEAs,
- The multi-sectorial aspect of plastic marine litter which makes it more complex to address
- Lack of knowledge from some part of the population. For example, a lot of people are not aware of the extent of the environmental damages they cause when they throw their cigarette butt in the street;
- Stakeholders (citizens and companies) willingness even if they are aware of pollution they are causing, in particular if they feel they can act with impunity;
- Lack of waste collection and waste management infrastructures, in particular waste recovery systems;
- Lack of economic benefits and incentives to use recycled plastics;
- Lack of consumption alternatives, including by promoting a zero waste approach (with less packaging, a greater use of glass containers, the promotion of short supply circuits, etc.);
- Easy access to single-use (plastic) products;
- Costs of solutions.

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

France would like to emphasise the fact that the previously mentioned studies identify several options to tackle this problem, including for some of them a social and economic analysis.

At the regional and international levels, several initiatives are already in place for example in the frameworks of the regional seas programmes, G7 and G20. These platforms provide relevant frameworks for countries to express concrete commitments and to take coordinated actions. France welcomes and supports actions priorities defined in these contexts, and consider that UNEA work should build on those and not start again from scratch.

The opportunity should be taken to include plastic marine litter issues and relevant objectives in existing international mechanisms, including Basel Convention (plastic marine litter will be at agenda of the OEWG in September 2018), the ongoing process, under the auspices of SAICM (Strategic approach to chemical management) to define the future platform on the sound management of chemical and waste beyond 2020 and work under the Convention for biological diversity to define the biodiversity strategic framework beyond 2020.

In addition to these existing initiatives, France believe that it would be important to have a dedicated platform to ensure coordination of, communication on and monitoring of actions implemented at the global level. The Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML) could be an appropriate forum to play this role. The Intergovernmental Review Meeting on the Implementation of the UNEP Global Plan of Action GPA that is to take place later this year could be an opportunity to discuss the format of this cooperation and potential necessary evolutions to ensure that the GPML can lead this task. However, France is open to discuss further which options/actions could be taken to strengthen global actions and commitments to prevent and reduce plastic marine litter, including how to strengthen actions from land-based activities

Furthermore at national level, France promotes the prevention of plastic waste through a change of behaviours reducing the demand for plastics, and targeting immediate measures about single use items and microplastics, which are well-identified sources of plastic pollution. Countries should also thrive for including plastic in a circular economy in order to ensure resource efficiency and propose concrete actions to promote recycling and the use of recycled plastics.

France already took important steps by establishing legal bans, which are now or soon into force (latest in 2020), regarding plastic bags, plastic cups and plates, cotton-buds and microbeads in cosmetics. France chose the legal option, other countries may prefer financial incentives. The method is up to each country, what is important is to share the same objective.

France also launched in 2016 the “Stop Plastic Waste” coalition, an opportunity to share experience and promote actions on this matter. A partnership with GPML-UNEP was established in order to involve more countries in this coalition. In this context a tool-box for political decision-makers to help them take action will be developed as well as a support programme for a small number of pilot countries willing to establish plastic waste reduction measures.

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

France considers that the following response options could be the most cost-effective ones, listed in priority order:

1. Solutions based on prevention of plastic waste generation by questioning our consumption habits and identifying unnecessary use of plastic or microplastics to strive towards eliminating them, including by promoting a zero waste approach (with less packaging, a greater use of glass containers, the promotion of

short supply circuits, encouraging the emerging initiatives for designing non-polluting alternatives like vegetal packaging etc.).

2. For necessary uses promoting the need to include the design, production and use of plastics and plastic products in a circular approach, ensuring sustainability and resources and energy efficiency, by promoting their possible reuse, repair and recycling, in order to ensure full economic benefits while curbing plastic pollution and its adverse impact on the environment and in particular the marine ecosystems,
3. Development and improvement of waste collection and management infrastructures to limit littering and facilitate recycling of plastics. Organisation of land and beach clean-ups can also be a way to raise awareness about the impact of littering;
4. Promote the development of an enabling environment for the use of recycled plastic while limiting the benefice to use virgin plastic, in order to increase business demands for recycled plastic, and thus limit littering and resource consumption by ensuring that plastic waste keep a? economical value.
5. Waste removal in rivers or in other pathways;
6. Waste removal at sea.

In order to implement these options, several triggers can be used by governments: legally binding instruments (laws and regulations), incentives and taxes, green deals, market-based initiatives supports, communication and raising awareness tools, research and development supports, etc.

What is certain is that there is a clear need to act at all level : national, regional and international and we need to improve the international governance of plastic marine litter. In a context where micro-plastics and plastic marine litter keep growing, there is a need for a dialogue, at the international level, to see how to strengthen the impact and coherence of existing activities in the different fora. We also need to make sure that the land/sea interlinkages are taken into account as we need to act on the cause and not only the impact of marine litter.

5. Any other inputs

List of relevant studies:

- UNEP (2017) Combating marine plastic litter and micro-plastics: An assessment of the effectiveness of relevant international, regional and subregional governance strategies and approaches”
- UNEP (2016). Marine plastic debris and microplastics – Global lessons and research to inspire action and guide policy change. United Nations Environment Programme, Nairobi. (UNEP), 2016 , ISBN No: 978-92-807-3580-6
- Gesamp: SOURCES, FATE AND EFFECTS OF MICROPLASTICS IN THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT: PART TWO
- <http://www.gesamp.org/site/assets/files/1720/rs93e.pdf> A
- [GESAMP 2016 Microplastics in marine environment.pdf](#)

- [IEEP ACES Product Fiche Single Use Plastics Final April 2017.pdf](#)
- [IEEP ACES Plastics Marine Litter Circular Economy briefing final April 2017.pdf](#)
- [IEEP ACES Microbeads Product Fiche Final April 2017.pdf](#)
- [IEEP ACES Polystyrene Product Fiche Final April 2017.pdf](#)

OSPAR publications and assessments:

- OSPAR: Marine Litter Regional Action Plan, 2015, **ISBN**:978-1-906840-86-0
- OSPAR intermediate assessment 2017, pressures from Human Activities/ Marine Litter
- Guideline for monitoring marine litter on the beaches in the OSPAR Maritime area - amendment 2014, ISBN: 978-1-906840-86-0
- Overview and assessment of implementation reports Fishing for Litter, 2014, ISBN 978-1-909159-62-
- Fishing for Litter Guidelines, 2017 **C**
- [CEMP Guidelines for monitoring marine litter washed ashore and/or deposited on coastlines \(beach litter\)](#)
- [Adopted: 2017, Cork. No: Agreement 2017-0R PLAS](#)

EU Plastics Strategy and related documents

- <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/circular-economy/pdf/plastics-strategy.pdf>
- <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/bb3ec82e-9a9f-11e6-9bca-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-56357670>
- UNEP: Biodegradable plastics and marine litter: misconceptions, concerns, and impacts on marine environments (2015);
- Ellen MacArthur Foundation: The new Plastics Economy: rethinking the future of plastics (2016);
- European Bioplastics: 'Oxo-biodegradable' plastics and other plastics with additives for degradation (2015);
- European Bioplastics: 'Oxo-biodegradable' plastics (2009).
- OWS: Benefits and challenges of oxo-biodegradable plastics (2013);
- European Commission (DG Environment) Intentionally added microplastics in product

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/chemicals/reach/pdf/39168%20Intentionally%20added%20microplastics%20-%20Final%20report%2020171020.pdf>