

## Format of the Position Paper

All Member States are invited to submit a concise position paper. The submissions may include the following elements:

1. Name of your organization

The Ministry for the Environment, on behalf of the New Zealand Government

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

The majority of marine litter and microplastics originates from land-based sources. We need to prioritise addressing the issue at the source, as well as responding to the symptoms such as through beach clean-ups. In practice this means prioritizing action to prevent plastics entering marine environments in the first place.

New Zealand has very limited information on the type, source, amount, flux and distribution of marine litter and microplastics in the marine environment, which we anticipate is an issue shared with many countries. This lack of data is a key impediment to identifying specific intervention points for reducing waste that ends up in the marine environment. These challenges are outlined in the Environment Aotearoa 2015 Report and the 2016 Marine Domain Report produced by MfE and StatsNZ.<sup>1</sup>

Beyond data, the key barriers include effective waste management practices on land, and developing innovative products (particularly packaging and single-use items) that use biodegradable materials.

We need to design products to have a long lifespan, be repairable, and increase the number of lifecycles of materials to reduce the volume of those materials becoming waste. When materials do become waste more effective management practices are required to prevent material from damaging the environment, including the marine environment. To achieve this we need to address barriers to changing our current production and consumption practices to more circular and sustainable ones, which would involve a coordinated government/industry approach.

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

In New Zealand's view, robust policy, legislative and regulatory frameworks are important to manage waste effectively and holistically. In New Zealand, the Waste Minimisation Act 2008, Resource Management Act 1991 and the Exclusive Economic Zone Act 2012 ensure that central and local

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<sup>1</sup> These reports are available on the website [mfe.govt.nz](http://mfe.govt.nz)

government work effectively to manage wastes, including in the marine environment, and ensure New Zealand meets relevant international obligations.

The New Zealand Government is currently focused on a broad, coordinated approach to address the issue of plastic litter in the marine environment nationally. Work has already begun with the banning of microbeads, investing in on-shore recycling of PET plastics, improving data on litter composition on our shores, and exploring options for phasing out single-use plastic shopping bags.

New Zealand attaches considerable importance to the role that responsible regional agencies play in waste and pollution management activity. In the Pacific, for example, the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme leads collaborative efforts on the Cleaner Pacific Strategy. Responsible regional bodies should be involved in new response options.

There are a number of existing global initiatives on marine litter, including the Clean Seas for a Cleaner Pacific, the UNEP Clean Seas Campaign, and the Global Partnership on Marine Litter. New Zealand welcomes action through these mechanisms, including where they promote action that can be accelerated at local levels. We encourage the UN and other international initiatives to take a holistic approach and to coordinate their proposed activities to avoid duplication and diluted effectiveness.

New Zealand would also encourage responses to focus on the source of marine litter and microplastics and working with relevant industries to take a circular design approach to materials and products.

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

Responses focused on the end of the cycle, such as cleaning up litter and microplastics, are necessary but will only have limited effectiveness as they are not aimed at the source of the problem. We feel a focus on both clean up and the source of the problem would be more feasible and more effective in the long term, particularly given the widespread recognition of the impact of marine litter and microplastics to our economic, social and environmental wellbeing.

#### 5. Any other inputs