

Position Paper. Spain.

1. Name of your organization

Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Food and Environment, Spain

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

Marine litter, including microplastics, come from a wide range of sources and pathways, which increases the complexity of the action to be taken to combat it. Some of those sources are land-based, and interactions land-sea are not present enough in the inland sectorial policies.

On the other hand, there is a significant diversity of stakeholders, from the public to the private sector, science institutions, NGOs and civil society in general, with different views and interests in the problem. Constructive dialogue, effective communication and common ground aspects identification are essential to define joint or individual actions. Contribution of every single stakeholder, including individual citizens, is essential.

Limited knowledge on effects of microplastics, mainly in the ecosystems and in human health, increase difficulty in communicating the magnitude of the problem and defining a proportional response. Precautionary principle and the concept of risk should be enough to motivate action, but there is a barrier when deciding the scope and thus to estimate cost of actions to be taken.

There is also a transboundary dimension of the problem of marine litter and microplastics that makes it impossible to follow the traceability and identify responsibility.

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

At the national level, national strategies are needed committing all Competent Authorities in aspects such as water and wastes management, fisheries and maritime Administrations, research institutions and public organisms managing research, development and innovation funds. Within the EU national marine strategies in compliance with the European Marine Strategies Framework Directive is a good example of such a national instrument. In Spain those strategies are conceived as an umbrella integrating measures from other policies (existing or planned) and new specific measures to achieve good environmental status. Measures dealing with marine litter are a 26% of the total program of measures of the Spanish Marine Strategies. Among those, a ban on non-compostable single-use plastic bags is included, and in the future all plastic bags > 50 micron will incorporate recycled plastic in their composition.

In addition, the Spanish Circular Economy Strategy, soon being published, is an essential instrument to close the loop and avoid littering in the riverine, coastal or marine environment. It will have a clear positive impact in the loads of litter entering the sea, especially plastics.

In parallel, research projects, many of them developed with European funds such as LIFE, EMFF or H2020, are conceived with a policy-science interphase philosophy, which means using science developments to give response to specific policy needs, by integrating Competent Authorities as partners or in the Advisory Board. A good example is the Life Integrated project INTEMARES, the biggest marine conservation project in Europe, with a clear objective of developing an innovative and participative marine protected areas network and with a marine litter component.

Also, the fishing sector is key to combat marine litter. For this reason Spain has planned to develop a national fishing for litter framework in close collaboration with the fishermen associations and the ports authorities.

In the European Union context, instruments towards a circular economy are preparing the field to perform a reduction of inputs of plastics in our oceans. The current revision of the Wastes European legislation and the publication of the Plastics Strategy the 16th January are good examples of such instruments. The Plastics Strategy itself commits to the development of new specific instruments, i.e new legislation on microplastics or on single-use plastics. Spain is supporting the European initiatives and approach on marine litter and microplastics.

At the regional level, Regional Seas Conventions role is essential to foster joint objectives and actions, address transboundary aspects of marine litter, exchange information and experience, increase capacity of response and develop regional or subregional marine litter monitoring and assessment. Besides this, the marine litter Regional Plans agreed in the Mediterranean Action Plan/Barcelona Convention and the OSPAR Convention were essential in the definition of the Spanish national measures.

Furthermore Spain is of the view that there is a need to ensure coordination and cooperation between the different international (global) forums relevant to combat marine litter and microplastics. In this context, not only UNEP but also the International Maritime Organization need to be involved together with the Fisheries Organizations and other UN agencies and Programs. In addition, we are convinced that the commitment of all relevant international organizations should materialize in the inclusion of litter and microplastics in their own work programs as an environmental priority to satisfy the agreements made by countries in connection with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

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

The use of international funds and the solidarity principle are essential to face this global challenge.

Effectiveness of response will be determined by an appropriate combination of legislative, economic and technical measures addressing prevention, removal and raise-awareness actions. Network collaboration is crucial to maintain all the stakeholders in the wheel.

A standardized global marine litter and microplastics monitoring system is needed to monitor and detect changes and assess effectiveness of the response. Work already carried out in this respect by the Regional Seas Conventions should be taken as essential background to avoid duplication and benefit from existing workstreams.

5. Any other inputs

Following previous UNEA meetings, several reports have been developed by UNEP addressing the issues of marine litter and microplastics, including the report "Combating marine plastic litter and microplastics", as prepared for UNEA-3. These reports include a wealth of information relevant to the work of the Ad Hoc Open Ended Expert Group. Other reports are available, e.g. through the Regional Seas Conventions.

An overview of studies and information that is publicly available can be found below. Spain believes is relevant to take it into account in developing the background papers to inform the discussions at the Ad Hoc Open Ended Expert Group.

Regarding paragraph 7b) of the UNEA-3 resolution, it requests UN Environment to provide advice on the prioritizing of activities upon request based on best available scientific knowledge, and the most environmentally

sound and cost-effective measures to prevent and reduce marine litter and microplastics. It would be informative for the Expert Group to receive an overview of key activities identified so far.

With regard to the work and the agenda of the Ad Hoc Open Ended Expert Group, Spain supports the proposed agenda and believe the Ad Hoc Open Ended Expert Group should focus its discussions items 4-7 on the draft agenda with a view to work towards a recommendation on potential options for future work to combat marine litter and microplastics for discussion at UNEA-4.

List of relevant studies (non-exhaustive):

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

Mediterranean Action Plan / Barcelona Convention:

Decision IG.21/7 Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean (2014)

Marine Litter Assessment in the Mediterranean (2015)

Decision IG.22/7 Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria (2015)

Decision IG.22/10 Implementing the Marine Litter Regional Plan in the Mediterranean (Fishing for Litter Guidelines, Assessment Report, Baselines Values, and Reduction Targets) (2015)

Quality Status Report (2017)

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

Fishing for Litter Guidelines, 2017

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-9a9f11e6-9bca-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>