

DRAFT OPTIONS

The Experts of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Expert Group established by the fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly pursuant to resolution UNEP/EA/3/7 (operative paragraph 10) met in Geneva from 29 to 31 May and 3 to 7 December 2018 to further examine the barriers to and options for combating marine plastic litter and microplastics from all sources, especially land-based sources, and provide options for continued work to the Environmental Assembly at its fourth session.

In addition to the mandate for their work in UNEA resolution 3/7, as a starting point for their work the experts considered the assessment “Combatting marine plastic litter and microplastics: an assessment of the effectiveness of relevant international regional and subregional governance strategies and approaches – a summary for policy makers” presented at the third session of the Environment Assembly, in December 2017 (UNEP/EA.3/INF./5). They also considered the summary report on barriers, which outlined possible response options and priority areas of action for the implementation of governance options (UNEP/AHEG/2018/2/2).

Various views were expressed during workshops and plenary meetings by the experts, including representatives of States, civil society and the private sector, on the science-based evidence of the impacts of marine litter and microplastics on human health and the environment, and on the options for addressing such impacts in the most effective and sustainable way, taking into account the interests of all concerned and affected.

The reports of the first and second meetings contain more detailed information on the various discussions and can be found at [link to be added].

Given that a plethora of activities are already carried out with regard to marine litter and microplastics by many stakeholders and under the existing governance frameworks, the experts noted the usefulness of exploring the potential of those frameworks to contribute in a more comprehensive fashion in addressing concerns relating to marine litter and microplastics within their respective mandates.

There is a need to eliminate marine litter and microplastics from land- and sea-based sources through a holistic and evidence-based approach to move to resource-efficient and circular management of plastic, avoiding leakage, including from “wear and tear” of products.

Prevention is paramount and is the priority; it is also critical to address legacy marine litter and microplastics already in the environment.

There is an urgent need for action, as production and consumer demand for plastic are outstripping our capacity to recycle plastic waste and manage plastic waste streams, jeopardizing the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal target 14.1.

Potential options for continued work

Information and Monitoring

The experts agreed that there was a need to strengthen the science/policy interface at the international level and to do more to support evidence-based approaches, improve understanding of the impacts of plastic litter on the marine environment, and promote local, national, and regional action on eliminating marine litter. The following options are proposed:

1. Establish a global knowledge hub to collect, collate and openly share monitoring data and information from all actors and sources; identify capacity-building needs and opportunities; ensure access to robust, reliable science and sound scientific practices, such as guidelines for the sampling and analysis of marine macroplastics and microplastics; identify demonstration projects and linkages with regional activities; and map out actors, initiatives and approaches. The knowledge hub could also serve as a source of, and clearinghouse for, national source inventories, improved waste management practices, and assessment, as well as conceptual and practical guidance materials to support governments, organizations, and private entities in addressing aspects of marine litter prevention and environmentally sound and risk-based recovery.
2. Commission an interagency examination of cost-benefits in relation to job transition;
3. Explore an interagency examination of health aspects in relation to marine litter and microplastics and plastic

4. Prepare a compendium of existing and planned industry initiatives including on EPR, product design, standards, innovating production quantities, additives, to enhance transparency and calibrate partnership opportunities;
5. Consider the establishment of a scientific and technical advisory group on marine litter and microplastics;

Coordination and Governance

The experts discussed various options and approaches for enhanced coordination and governance. A number of proposals were considered and are described in the report of the meeting and its annexes. The following options are proposed:

6. Further consider the feasibility and effectiveness of a potential coordinating structure building on existing mechanisms, partnerships and agreements within their existing mandates and scope;
7. Consider the feasibility and effectiveness of a potential international legally binding agreement on marine litter and microplastics;
8. Consider the establishment of a forum for governments, industry, academia, civil society, and other stakeholders to share experiences and coordinate action, on a regular or ad hoc basis;
9. Establish an interim coordinating structure to ensure effective follow up to UNEA 4 outcomes in relation to the request in paragraph 10 of UNEA resolution 3/7 and the above.