

Room 1 Summary Discussion

Overview

These notes attempt to capture the points of discussion in our expert group discussion. They should not be considered consensus points and they are not recommendations. This is the information that was discussed and that we would like to share with UNEA. Understandably, the points that I will share are not all encompassing of all that was discussed.

Many of our participants provided written submissions. We discussed elements of those but we recommend that all participants review those in detail.

Summary:

Information and Monitoring

- There is a need for a common platform to share scientific data that is open and accessible.
- There is a desire to promote harmonized monitoring systems and methodologies rather than standardization as some countries will have different priorities and resources. Participants mentioned the need to consider upstream information, production patterns, design, and use.
- *Members of the group expressed a need for more information on the following:*
 - A better understanding of alternatives to single-use and problematic (e.g. non-recyclable) plastics.
 - Changing import and export patterns of plastic raw material, products and waste.
 - Health and environmental implications of additives in plastics.
 - More information on the life cycle of plastics- how much are produced, how are they used, what happens at the end of life (reused, recycled, landfill, litter, etc)? This should include an upstream approach.
 - More transparency on the drivers for increased plastic production
 - Reports on national level on waste management
 - The relative contribution of sea based and land based sources of marine litter.
- *Members expressed a need for:*
 - An assessment on existing information and to map solutions to inform.
 - To understand marine litter pollution from a geographic perspective and to identify the source, type, quantities, distribution, and transport.
 - A discussion on if data should be stored in a centralized location and if so, where that should be.
 - There is a need to strengthen the involvement of industry to improve data collection;
 - Neutral coordination to collect and analyze data at a global level

- To work more closely with the fishing industry and Regional Fishery Management Organizations to reduce the marine litter from the fishing industry and improve the monitoring.
- Assess the current state of monitoring and identify where there are geographic gaps. Encourage those areas to use established methodology to collect baselines and collect monitoring data.
- There is a need to address the gaps on information and monitoring, provide global coordination, collect and share information.
- There is a need to conduct gap, SWOT and impact analysis on reporting and monitoring;
- Take advantage of public interest, through Citizens Science and other programmes, to improve data collection on leakages and strengthen monitoring where appropriate.

Information should be shared on the following:

- Successful examples of efforts to raising awareness, innovative solutions and behavior change would be helpful.

Existing legal frameworks that could support monitoring and information

- Monitoring and/or reporting systems under Basel, Stockholm, MARPOL, London and the Regional Seas Conventions and Regional Fishery Management Organizations as well as country monitoring and/or reporting systems collect some relevant information;
- Existing platforms, such as Global partnership on marine litter or the Partnership for Regional Ocean Governance to host data should be examined.
- National monitoring systems could be tweaked to look at plastic to address the gaps of existing international, such as national level impacts;
- It is important to recognize landlocked countries in the context of Basel

Implication of options for information and monitoring

- Members of the group felt that more than the three options should be included for discussion purposes.
- Monitoring is relevant to all options. Monitoring will depend on requirements of the convention or structure.
- Participants expressed that the status quo is not an option, measures need to be taken now even if data is not perfect yet;

Governance Discussion

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Legal barriers

- Participants the following were legal barriers to combat the issue of marine litter:
 - There is not a single coordination mechanism dealing with this complex issue and in particular with the prevention of plastic pollution is currently in existence.
 - A lack of integration between ministries of fisheries and terrestrial issues, in particular in developing countries. Regional seas action plans also vary in the degree in which they refer to fisheries. Any overarching instrument should address this coordination issue.
 - Major barriers occur at the national and subnational level, most of the marine litter derives from improper management of waste which is the responsibility of states.
 - Other barriers include: compliance and enforcement and ratification, targets and standards and definitions.

Possible response options to the implementation of the proposed options

- Legally binding protocols to the regional seas impose obligations on countries with reporting requirements.
- Response will vary depending on the level of intervention during the lifecycle, e.g. the upstream production, beach cleanup, waste management;
- Monitoring can be either global, regional, national, local or municipal (e.g. for waste management);
- Continue strengthening existing mechanisms, such as IMO and the regional seas conventions, under their respective mandates;
- More robust analysis on the effectiveness of existing binding and voluntary mechanisms is needed;
- There is a need for a new forum to analyze national and global trends (e.g. on labeling, recycling, extended producer responsibility, trade) and decide whether we need a legally-binding or voluntary approach at global level;
- Regulating plastic production and design is fundamental to address the source of the problem. There is a need of unified standards across countries, because plastic waste moves across the borders.
- Address the link between production and use;
- Need to control items that produce microplastics which are not single-use plastics

Voluntary or legally binding agreements: advantages and disadvantages

- Partnerships/voluntary approach: Faster, more flexible and more ambitious (no need to reach consensus) (e.g. Quick Start)
- Key elements of voluntary approach: clear scope, leading bodies, regular updates, coordination body, industry engagement, sharing outcomes
- Advantages of a legally-binding agreement: more weight, gives countries more confidence to take action if they know that other are also taking action (joint efforts, no free-riders), more effective in supporting coordinate at national level; provides a set of different measures, such as capacity building and other support mechanisms from developing countries in the implementation of the agreement. Disadvantages: many years of negotiation.
- Mixed approach: partnership while preparations are ongoing for a legal instrument.
- Legally binding agreement usually has mixed provisions: hard (e.g. ban with exemptions) or soft (no control measures, every party to develop an action plan with more discretion on what they want to do);
- A legally-binding agreement can also be flexible and agile and create a level playing field with no free-riders;
- There is a need to start early the negotiation process given that it will take a long time.
- GPML could be strengthened to better meet the needs of this issue

Elements of the governance structure to address marine litter

- Norway, Sweden, and a group of Environmental Stakeholders provided written summaries and elements of these were discussed.
- Some of the elements that were discussed
 - Clear scope
 - voluntary measures,
 - coordination bodies or funds
 - cooperation of industry
 - sharing outcomes
 - Reduction of production
 - Prohibition of additives
 - Provision of financial support
 - Technical support
 - Information sharing
 - Coordination
 - Waste management
 - Build on existing structures
 - Plastic prevention
 - Shared objectives
 - Targets
 - mechanism to facilitate the implementation
 - clarity on who is tasked to implement the activities (multiple stakeholders vs. only governments)
 - adaptive management approach
 - evidence based
 - identification and sharing of information and science and made available

- measuring progress (targets or standards)
- Many of these items could be done through a voluntary agreement or through a legally binding instrument. How they would be addressed would be different depending on voluntary or legally binding, but it could be done both ways.
- Basel, MARPOL and Stockholm tackle different issues that are very relevant to the solution of the problem from different perspective, such as trade, pollution of ships, and POPs. None of these instruments tackle the entire issue. There is a need to use a single approach to the solution: this is a long-term goal and we need to start working now.
- Coordination is different: each body (Basel, MARPOL, Stockholm, SAICN, Regional Seas) is an independent organization and coordination cannot be imposed from the top.
- Improve integration between land based and sea-based actors both at regional and international levels (e.g. people from both ministries involved).
- Regional fisheries management organizations and regional seas need to cooperate more closely;
- The discussion is not just about products but also waste management.
- Waste management can be supported by Basel Convention in particular to assist developing countries. This can be an immediate starting point
- Coordinating body could be established quickly depending on the will of the bodies that need to be coordinated. An approach can entail a mixture of interventions building on existing structures
- Possible platforms: GPML, amendment to the Annexes of Basel Convention, Partnership on Plastic Waste.
- Role of industries in getting the solution

How do we do it? Solution-based options

- A lot is already happening, we should not take over but rather coordinate existing efforts.
- Scope needs to take into account the whole lifecycle of plastic;
- Define the purpose of the new structure?
- Immediate gaps to be filled: identify best available alternatives, recycling, circular economy, and identify priorities and geographical priority areas;
- On the purpose: close loop for plastic recycling is not possible at the moment, therefore we need to focus on reduction of production.
- Health and environmental risks of incineration and transforming pollution to one source to another
- Immediate fix (bans on plastic bags) vs. long-term solutions, such as environmental sound waste management which requires sustained work, capacity building and finance (e.g. of waste management physical infrastructure, enforcement, technical solutions);
- Solution: improve raise awareness to reduce littering locally, regionally and internationally;
- Building on existing partnership programme like in the example of the Minamata Convention;
- Asian countries are starting to take collective action to reduce marine litter as are many national programs.
- Short term intervention: Building technical and financial capacity at national and international levels to support waste management infrastructure; fill research gaps; better understand the gaps with the existing framework, in particular in terms of effectiveness.
- Support to some kind of remediation activities, in particular on the shorelines, beaches and rivers, as well as fishing for litter activities, to be further explored and included in governance structure;

- Packaging is needed for reduce food waste and medical purposes and. Benefits of the use of single-use plastic should be taken into account and alternative solutions be considered, such as 100% reuse, recovery and recycling of plastic packing by 2040 (voluntary commitment form the industry);
- Responsible use of single-use, cutting unnecessary generation, and promoting multiple use of plastic should be promoted rather than no use;