

Information provided by the International Maritime Organization (IMO)

1. *Relevant issues being considered in international forums and their possible impact on the plastic pollution negotiation process.*

IMO is the UN specialized agency for shipping, responsible for regulating shipping, as well as dumping of wastes at sea. Consequently, these issue (marine plastic litter from ships and marine plastic litter in wastes dumped at sea) are high on the agenda in our meetings and, since the global regulations on these matters are set through IMO, needs to be taken into account in the INC. IMO is also the secretariat for GESAMP (the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection), which has two very productive Working Groups on marine litter, both contributing greatly to the work of the 10 UN Sponsoring Organizations.

2. *Information on upcoming relevant events, discussions, and processes.*

REGULATORY WORK

The aspects of marine plastic litter related to operational discharges from ships is regulated under **MARPOL Annex V**, under which the discharge of waste containing plastics has been prohibited since the 1980s. To strengthen the work on these matters, and improve implementation, IMO adopted an Action Plan to Address Marine Plastic Litter from Ships, in 2018 (see resolution MEPC.310(73). In 2021, IMO adopted a Strategy on Marine Plastic Litter (MEPC.341(77), to further strengthen efforts. The adoption of the Strategy follows the adoption, in 2018, of the IMO Action Plan to address marine litter (read more here: <https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Pages/marinelitter-default.aspx>).

- The Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC), in particular through its Sub-Committee on Pollution Preventions and Response (PPR), is also currently discussing:
- Proposals related to making the marking of fishing gear mandatory;
- Proposals to extend the requirement for a Garbage Record Book to ships less than 400 GT and equal to or greater than 100 GT. MEPC has instructed the PPR Sub-Committee to prepare draft amendments to MARPOL Annex V.
- Plastic pollution by plastic pellets, in light of the May 2021 MV X-Press Pearl incident, during which plastic pellets were spilled off the shore of Colombo, Sri Lanka. This has been referred by the Committee to the PPR Sub-committee for further discussion.

IMO is also the secretariat for the **1972 London Convention and its 1996 Protocol (LC/LP), on the prevention of marine pollution from dumping of waste and other matter**. The Contracting Parties have completed a review of the state of knowledge with respect to how the dumping of wastes may contribute to the presence of marine litter, in particular plastics, in the marine environment. Dredged materials and sewage sludge are thought to be the most likely of the waste streams to contribute to the presence of marine litter. Download the report here: https://wwwcdn.imo.org/localresources/en/OurWork/Environment/Documents/Marine%20litter%20review%20for%20publication%20April%202016_final_ebook_version.pdf

In 2016, the Contracting Parties, acknowledged the significant quantity of marine litter entering the ocean and the severe and long-lasting threat it poses to the marine environment, and

adopted a recommendation to encourage action to combat marine litter (see full statement here). The Parties also noted the problem of abandoned fibreglass vessels in the marine environment, and agreed to investigate the issue further.

Most recently, the LC/LP Scientific Groups instructed its Correspondence Group on marine litter and microplastics to (see document LC/SG 45/16):

- .1 review the inventory of the work carried out by the LC/LP bodies on the issue of marine litter and microplastics;
- .2 identify relevant aspects of the LC/LP regulatory framework in relation to marine litter and microplastics;
- .3 develop an overview of possible source control options to reduce the presence of marine litter in LC/LP waste streams; and
- .4 submit a progress report to the 2022 meeting of the LC/LP governing bodies, and to the next session of the Scientific Groups in 2023.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Also, IMO, in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), is implementing the **GloLitter Partnerships Project** which aims to help shipping and fisheries move to a low-plastics future. (Read more here: [https://wwwcdn.imo.org/localresources/en/OurWork/PartnershipsProjects/Documents/DPP-Factsheets/DPP%20one-page%20fact%20sheets \(25-10-21\) FINAL ONLINE GLOLITTER.pdf](https://wwwcdn.imo.org/localresources/en/OurWork/PartnershipsProjects/Documents/DPP-Factsheets/DPP%20one-page%20fact%20sheets%20(25-10-21)%20FINAL%20ONLINE%20GLOLITTER.pdf))

STRENGTHENING THE KNOWLEDGE BASE AND COORDINATION

As mentioned above, IMO is the **secretariat for GESAMP (the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection)**, which has two very productive Working Groups on marine litter, both contributing greatly to the work of the 10 UN Sponsoring Organizations (IMO, IAEA, IOC-UNESCO, UN DOALOS, UNEP, UNDP, FAO, ISA, UNIDO, WMO). Other working groups are also actively addressing the issue as part of their TOR, including WG 38 on the .

3. *Documents and information sources relating to plastic pollution.*

A useful summary of IMO's work on marine litter can be found at:

<https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Pages/marinelitter-default.aspx>

Extensive documents and resources are also available from the submissions and reports to both MEPC and the LC/LP, see <http://docs.imo.org>

The following reports by GESAMP, co-sponsored by several UN agencies, provide extensive information on marine litter and microplastics:

- "Sea-based sources of marine litter", Report of GESAMP WG 43, 2021, GESAMP Reports and Studies No.108, <http://www.gesamp.org/site/assets/files/2213/rs108e.pdf>
- "Guidelines for the Monitoring and Assessment of Plastic Litter in the Ocean", Report of GESAMP WG 40, 2019, GESAMP Reports and Studies No.99, <http://www.gesamp.org/site/assets/files/2002/rs99e.pdf>

- “Sources, Fate and Effects of Microplastics in the Marine Environment (Part 2)”, Report of GESAMP WG 40, 2016, GESAMP Reports and Studies No.93, <http://www.gesamp.org/publications/microplastics-in-the-marine-environment-part-2>
- “Sources, Fate and Effects of Microplastics in the Marine Environment (Part 1)”, Report of GESAMP WG 40, 2015, GESAMP Reports and Studies No.90, <http://www.gesamp.org/site/assets/files/1272/reports-and-studies-no-90-en.pdf>