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**United Nations
Environment Assembly of the
United Nations Environment
Programme**

**Ad hoc open-ended expert group
on marine litter and microplastics
Second meeting**
Geneva, 3–7 December 2018

**Report of the second meeting of the ad hoc open-ended expert
group on marine litter and microplastics**

I. Introduction

1. In accordance with resolution 3/7, on marine litter and microplastics, adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) at its third session, held in Nairobi from 4 to 6 December 2017, the secretariat of UNEP convened two meetings of the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics, established pursuant to the same resolution, with a view to further examining the barriers to and options for combating marine plastic litter and microplastics from all sources, especially land-based sources.

II. Opening of the meeting

2. The second meeting of the ad hoc open-ended expert group was opened on Monday, 3 December 2018, by Ms. Elizabeth Taylor Jay (Colombia), Co-Chair of the ad hoc open-ended expert group.

3. Opening statements were made by the Co-Chairs of the ad hoc open-ended expert group, Ms. Taylor Jay and Ms. Jillian Dempster (New Zealand), and by Mr. Habib El-Habr, Coordinator of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities.

III. Organizational matters

A. Adoption of the agenda

4. The ad hoc open-ended expert group adopted the following agenda for its second session, on the basis of the provisional agenda (UNEP/AHEG/2018/2/1):

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Organizational matters:
 - (a) Adoption of the agenda;
 - (b) Organization of work;
 - (c) Election of officers.
3. Update on progress since the first meeting of the ad hoc open-ended expert group.

4. Workshop discussions:
 - (a) Information and monitoring;
 - (b) Governance.
5. Summary of workshop discussions.
6. Options for continued work.
7. Preparation of input to the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly.
8. Other matters.
9. Adoption of the report.
10. Closure of the meeting.

B. Organization of work

5. The ad hoc open-ended expert group took note of the organization of work set out in the annotated provisional agenda (UNEP/AHEG/2018/2/1/Add.1).

C. Election of officers

6. Pursuant to the rules of procedure of the United Nations Environment Assembly, the Co-Chairs and Rapporteur elected at the first meeting of the ad hoc open-ended expert group continued to exercise those functions.

IV. Update on progress since the first meeting of the ad hoc open-ended expert group

7. Presentations on the progress made since the first meeting of the ad hoc open-ended expert group were made by Ms. Heidi Savelli-Soderberg, Programme Officer, Marine Litter, Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities, UNEP; Mr. Loukas Kontogiannis, International Maritime Organization; Ms. Joanna Toole, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; Mr. Jacob Duer, Chief, Chemicals and Health Branch, Economy Division, UNEP; Mr. Rolph Payet, Executive Secretary, Basel, Stockholm and Rotterdam conventions; and Ms. Jennifer DeFrance, World Health Organization.
8. Ms. Karen Raubenheimer, Research Fellow, Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security, University of Wollongong, Australia, presented an assessment of the effectiveness of relevant international, regional and subregional governance strategies and approaches for combating marine plastic litter and microplastics (UNEP/AHEG/2018/1/INF/3).
9. Comments were made by representatives of Guatemala, Togo and the United States of America.
10. Participants took note of the information provided.

V. Workshop discussions

11. Ms. Jacqueline McGlade, a consultant, presented a consolidated background paper summarizing the discussion papers presented at the first meeting of the ad hoc open-ended expert group (UNEP/AHEG/2018/2/2).
12. Comments were made by representatives of the European Union, France and Japan.
13. Participants took note of the information provided.

A. Presentation of the topic “information and monitoring”

14. A representative of the secretariat introduced a note by the secretariat on the workshops on information and monitoring (UNEP/AHEG/2018/2/3).
15. Participants took note of the information provided.

B. Presentation of the topic “governance”

16. Representatives of the secretariat introduced a note by the secretariat on the workshops on governance (UNEP/AHEG/2018/2/4).
17. Participants took note of the information provided.

C. Discussions

18. Participants held focused discussions, in dedicated workshops and in plenary meetings, on the two topics, taking into account the background paper UNEP/AHEG/2018/2/2 and the guiding questions in documents UNEP/AHEG/2018/2/3 and UNEP/AHEG/2018/2/4.

VI. Summary of workshop discussions

19. The workshop discussions on information and monitoring¹ were summarized by the workshop co-facilitators: Ms. Nancy Wallace, Director, Marine Debris Program, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, representing the United States of America; Mr. Douw Steyn, representing the World Plastics Council; Ms. Maricris Laciste, Senior Science Research Specialist, Environmental Management Bureau, representing the Philippines; Ms. Marta Juárez Ruíz, Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations Office at Nairobi; Ms. Imogen Ingram, representing the Island Sustainability Alliance; and Ms. Francisca Ashietey-Odunton, High Commissioner for Ghana in Kenya and Permanent Representative of Ghana to the United Nations Office at Nairobi.

20. Comments were made by representatives of Argentina, Azerbaijan, Canada, China, the Cook Islands, Costa Rica, the European Union, the Federated States of Micronesia, France, the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), Italy, Japan, Montenegro, Norway, Senegal, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Turkey and the United States of America.

21. Comments were also made by representatives of the International Maritime Organization and the secretariat of the Basel, Stockholm and Rotterdam conventions.

22. Comments were also made by representatives of the Association of Environmental Education for Future Generations, Circular Plastics, the Global Ghost Gear Initiative and the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

23. The workshop discussions on governance² were summarized by the workshop co-facilitators: Ms. Andrea Jacobs, representing the Antigua and Barbuda Marine Ecosystem Protected Areas Trust; Mr. Sebastian Koenig, Senior Policy Adviser, Federal Office for the Environment, Switzerland; Ms. Leida Rijnhout, representing the Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future; Mr. Eirik Lindebjerg, representing the World Wide Fund for Nature; Ms. Ingram; and Ms. Ashietey-Odunton.

24. Participants took note of the information provided.

VII. Options for continued work

25. Ms. Savelli-Soderberg gave a presentation on the Global Partnership on Marine Litter.

26. Comments were made by representatives of France, Germany and Uruguay.

27. Comments were also made by representatives of UNEP and of the secretariat of the Basel, Stockholm and Rotterdam conventions.

28. Comments were also made by a representative of the Center for Oceanic Awareness, Research and Education, also speaking on behalf of women and the scientific and technological community.

29. Ms. Brenda Koekkoek, Programme Management Officer, Chemicals and Health Branch, Economy Division, UNEP, gave a presentation on the work of SAICM.

30. Comments were made by representatives of Costa Rica, Eswatini, the European Union, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden and Togo.

¹ A summary of the discussions on information and monitoring is available at https://papersmart.unon.org/resolution/uploads/summary_of_information_and_monitoring.pdf.

² A summary of the discussions on governance is available at https://papersmart.unon.org/resolution/uploads/governance_summary_for_posting_final_lowith_annex_.pdf.

31. Comments were also made by representatives of the secretariat of the Basel, Stockholm and Rotterdam conventions and of the SAICM secretariat.
32. Comments were also made by representatives of the International POPs Elimination Network and of the International Council of Chemical Association, the latter also speaking on behalf of business and industry.
33. The representative of Sweden gave a presentation on his Government's proposal for a new global governance structure for combating marine plastic litter and microplastics.
34. Comments were made by a representative of the Center for International Environmental Law.
35. The representative of Norway gave a presentation on his Government's proposal for a stronger global governance structure for preventing and combating marine litter and microplastics.
36. Comments were made by representatives of Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, the European Union, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Italy, Japan, Malawi, the Maldives, Mauritius, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Peru, Portugal, Switzerland, Togo, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Vanuatu.
37. Comments were also made by a representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
38. Comments were also made by representatives of the Association of Environmental Education for Future Generations; of the World Wide Fund for Nature; and of No Waste Louisiana and Zero Waste Europe, both speaking on behalf of the Break Free from Plastic movement.
39. Ms. Dempster, Co-Chair, presented an informal document on information and monitoring.
40. Ms. Lara Ognibene, Legal Officer, UNEP, presented a report on legislation addressing single-use plastics and microplastics.
41. Comments were made by a representative of the secretariat.
42. Ms. Taylor Jay, Co-Chair, presented an informal document on governance.
43. Comments were made by representatives of Australia, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, the European Union, France, Gabon, Germany, Ghana, India, Italy, Japan, Mauritania, the Netherlands, Norway, Senegal, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.
44. Comments were also made by representatives of the Center for International Environmental Law, the Island Sustainability Alliance, and workers and trade unions.
45. Ms. Taylor Jay presented an informal document summarizing the discussions that had taken place on governance.
46. Comments were made by representatives of Canada, Eswatini, the European Union, Gabon, Japan, Mauritania, the Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Senegal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Togo and the United States of America.
47. Comments were also made by representatives of the Center for International Environmental Law and business and industry.

VIII. Preparation of input to the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

48. Ms. Dempster introduced a draft document, based on the discussions held during the meeting, that presented potential options for continued work for consideration by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its fourth session
49. Comments were made by representatives of Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, the European Union, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Singapore, Switzerland, Togo, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, and by a representative of the secretariat.
50. Comments were also made by representatives of the Center for International Environmental Law, International Union for Conservation of Nature, the World Wide Fund for Nature, business and industry, women, and workers and trade unions.

51. Ms. Dempster presented a revised version of the draft document presenting potential options for continued work.
52. Comments were made by representatives of Brazil, Canada, Malaysia, Norway, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, by a representative of the secretariat, and by a representative of the secretariat of the Basel, Stockholm and Rotterdam conventions.
53. Comments were also made by a representative of the Center for International Environmental Law.
54. Participants approved the revised draft document with the understanding that it would be updated to reflect comments made at the meeting.

VIII. Other matters

55. Participants viewed a video submitted by the Government of Guatemala on a marine litter recovery initiative.
56. A presentation on the initiative was made by Mr. Alfonso Alonza, Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources, Guatemala.

IX. Adoption of the report

57. Ms. Dempster proposed that the report of the meeting be finalized after the meeting and circulated to all participants, with the document containing potential options for continued work for consideration by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its fourth session contained in an annex to the report.
58. It was so decided.

X. Closure of the meeting

59. Closing remarks were made by Ms. Dempster; Mr. Gaetano Leone, Acting Director, UNEP Regional Office for Europe; and Mr. El-Habr.
60. The meeting was declared closed at 6 p.m. on Friday, 7 December 2018.

Annex

Potential options for continued work for consideration by the United Nations Environment Assembly

1. The experts of the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics established by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its third session, in December 2017, pursuant to its resolution 3/7,¹ met in Nairobi from 29 to 31 May 2018 and in Geneva from 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 to provide options for continued work to the Environment Assembly at its fourth session.
2. In addition to the mandate for their work in resolution 3/7, as a starting point for their work the experts considered a summary for policymakers entitled “Combating marine plastic litter and microplastics: an assessment of the effectiveness of relevant international, regional and subregional governance strategies and approaches” presented at the third session of the Environment Assembly (UNEP/EA.3/INF/5). They also considered a document summarizing the discussion papers presented at their first meeting and outlining possible response options and priority areas of action for the implementation of governance options (UNEP/AHEG/2018/2/2).
3. 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.
4. The experts stressed the importance of reducing the impact of marine litter and microplastics on our oceans, on the marine and coastal environment and on coastal communities, human health and economies.
5. 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. Many experts also noted that an effective response to the issue of marine litter and microplastics would require a new legally binding agreement.
6. There is a need to eliminate marine litter and microplastics from land- and sea-based sources through a holistic and evidence-based approach considering the full life-cycle to move to resource-efficient and circular management of plastic, avoiding leakage.
7. Prevention is paramount and is the priority; it is also critical to address legacy marine litter and microplastics already in the environment.
8. There is an urgent need for action as our capacity to reuse, repair, remanufacture, refurbish, recover and recycle plastic waste and manage plastic waste streams is limited because of design and certain additives and outstripped by the production and consumer demand for plastic, jeopardizing the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal target 14.1 (“by 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution”) as well as other relevant targets, such as target 12.4 on the environmentally sound management of chemicals and wastes.

Potential options for continued work

9. 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, regional and global action to eliminate marine litter. The following options were proposed:
 - (a) Consider modalities for the establishment of a global knowledge hub which could, inter alia, make it possible to develop harmonized monitoring methodologies; to collect, collate and openly share global monitoring data and information from all actors and sources, including citizen science; to ensure access to robust, reliable science and sound scientific practices, such as on additives; to develop guidelines for the sampling and analysis of marine macro- and microplastics; to identify

¹ UNEP/EA.3/Res.7.

demonstration projects and linkages with regional activities; and to map out actors, initiatives and approaches. The knowledge hub could initiate activities and 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;

(b) Consider the establishment of a scientific and technical advisory group on marine litter and microplastics, benefiting from the work of existing mechanisms such as the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection;

(c) Explore an interagency examination of health and environmental aspects in relation to marine litter and microplastics and plastic with a source-to-sea approach as well as an examination of costs and benefits in relation to job transition;

(d) Consider preparing a compendium of relevant existing and planned industry initiatives, including on product design, standards, innovation, production quantities and additives, to enhance transparency and calibrate partnership opportunities, as well as examples of existing national-level actions such as extended producer responsibility (EPR) to supplement the compendium.

10. The experts discussed various options and approaches for enhanced coordination and governance. They identified a number of principles that should guide follow-up in this area, including the following: Responses to the problem of marine litter and microplastics should be aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals. Political will is essential for effective outcomes. Information and research are critical enablers. The overall approach should be comprehensive and holistic, transparent and evidence-based. It should incorporate sea-based and land-based sources, the circular economy perspective and the full-life-cycle approach. It should target the elimination and prevention of plastic waste and marine litter, and should include immediate as well as sustained, long-term action. It should be supported by and grounded in a science-policy interface; international cooperation; multi-stakeholder engagement; and the realities of differences in regional and local contexts and (technical/financial) capacities.

11. The following options for enhanced coordination and governance are proposed but are not mutually exclusive and could be explored in parallel:

(a) Consider strengthening coordination at the global level through existing partnerships and mechanisms working on marine litter and related issues, such as the Global Partnership on Marine Litter and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, and broadening their scope; and, if necessary, consider the feasibility and effectiveness of a potential new coordinating structure building on existing initiatives;

(b) Improve coordination at the regional level, notably with existing international instruments such as regional seas programmes, regional fisheries bodies and river-basin committees;

(c) Encourage new, and enhance existing, forms of financing and technical support to developing countries and small island developing States; assist governments and other entities in accessing available resources from a variety of sources for marine litter activities; and identify and support capacity-building needs and opportunities for, for example, developing countries, small island developing States and local communities;

(d) Consider the feasibility and effectiveness of a potential international legally binding agreement on marine litter and microplastics;

(e) Consider the establishment of a forum enabling governments, industry, academia, civil society and other stakeholders to share experiences and coordinate action on a regular or ad hoc basis.

12. There were mixed views on whether to establish an interim coordinating structure to ensure effective follow-up to the outcomes of the fourth session of the Environment Assembly in relation to the request in paragraph 10 of resolution 3/7 and the above input.