

First Working Group Meeting 2018
Ad-Hoc Open-Ended Expert Group on Marine Litter
Nairobi, Kenya May 29-31, 2018

ROPME Statement on Item 4: Barriers to Addressing Marine Litter

Thank you Chairman. I take this opportunity to thank UNEP for hosting this event and for supporting efforts on combating the problem of the marine litter and microplastics. I am representing ROPME which was established in 1978 by the eight Governments of the region (Bahrain, I.R. Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE).

Well, plastic wastes and microplastics in the marine environment as you are aware have been a growing problem globally and regionally, as well. However, it is more aggravated in the ROPME Sea Area. Available information and figures about this problem in the region are alarming. In Dubai for example, waste generation ratio per visitor varied between 250 g and 1.08 kg. Dubai city generates alone about 8,200 tonnes of municipal solid waste per day i.e 15% above the global average, according to a study released in 2016. Large part of these wastes are eventually delivered or ending up to the coasts and the sea.

Dumping of plastics also represents a sensitive issue in the whole region, with the capacity to cause social unrest, as in the case of Lebanon where a mountain of unrecycled plastic washed ashore last year added to its festering crisis over uncollected rubbish.

This shows that there is urgent need to tackle the problem of plastic wastes in the region and to take necessary actions for its combating. However, this is not an easy task as there are so many barriers confronting its solution.

Major barriers to combatting marine litter and microplastics

These can be listed as follows:

- Localization and discoordination of clean-up efforts
- Lack of assessment studies & research on the extent of the problem in the region
- High rate of consumption of plastics per individual and increased usage of single-use plastics
- Lack of recycling concept and reprocessing of plastic wastes into useful products
- Lack of standardization of the plastic products and other requirements of recycling.

As a regional, intergovernmental organization, ROPME provides a good platform for Member States and concerned parties to work together towards finding common solutions for the problem of the marine litter.

ROPME has also played a key role in the following Protocols in which all types of wastes including plastics are fully addressed:

- Protocol concerning Marine Pollution resulting from Exploration and Exploitation of the Continental Shelf (1989),
- Protocol for the Protection of the Marine Environment against Pollution from Land-Based Sources (1990),
- Protocol on the Control of Marine Trans-boundary Movements and Disposal of Hazardous Wastes and Other Wastes (1998)

Efforts are continue. In this respect, a regional workshop on marine plastics and marine litter, in general is planned to be organized in cooperation with UNEP's Global Programme of Action (GAP) for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities in September 2018. The main aim of this workshop is to identify priority actions to address marine litter and microplastics in the region and to facilitate cooperation between stakeholders in order to stimulate the development of regional action plans and a special strategy for marine litters and plastics.