

Response option U.S. talking points (and submission)

The U.S. has one of the largest EEZs and longest coastlines in the world at 12.2million KM² and 19,000km long respectively. The U.S. has more than 1,200 MPAs covering more than 3.2 million square kilometers or 26% of U.S. waters. We take the issue of marine debris very seriously as we seek to conserve those species, habitats, and other resources vital to our ecosystems and economy. In 2006, the U.S. Congress created the Marine Debris Program, which has enabled us to better coordinate across the government to grapple with this multi-faceted issue.

The U.S. has been actively contributing to this field, working in tandem with other G7 and G20 countries as well as with UNEP, IMO, FAO, and other international organizations. Given the importance of marine litter to the U.S., we have hosted, and co-hosted with UNEP, several International Marine Debris conferences, beginning with the first conference in 1984 and most recently, the 6th conference held in March this year in San Diego, California. Staff from the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration served as the first chair of the Steering Committee for the Global Partnership on Marine Litter from its inception in 2012, until this year. The U.S. is also an active participant in three regional seas programs active in addressing marine litter - the Wider Caribbean, the Asia-Pacific and the Arctic.

And what we have learned from much of this experience when it comes to options, is that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to marine litter. As we discussed in our intervention on barriers, there are several categories of challenges- legal, financial, technological and information. Further, depending on the particular barriers a community or country faces, the solutions will vary.

We are pleased to offer some general views on response options, as others have begun to do at this meeting. In our experience, response options must be inclusive and engage a broad range of stakeholders, including industry, academia, NGOs and others. Governments and international bodies cannot solve marine litter challenges alone and must develop effective partnerships. In particular, we need to partner with ongoing industry efforts that are driving innovation in materials management; that are creatively sourcing their materials (such as Adidas using ocean plastic to make sneakers), and that are committing to self-determined targets such as Coca Cola's goal to help collect and recycle an amount of material equivalent to 100% of its packaging by 2030). This kind of engagement is important at all levels- sub-national, national, regional and international.

At the sub-national or national level, an important response option is putting in place effective waste management systems which include an integrated system that is tailored to a particular nation, and/or a municipality. These systems should be informed by comprehensive waste characterization studies which are fundamental to understanding the specific elements of the waste stream so that the most critical problems and gaps are identified for which targeted solutions can be implemented.

Innovative financing mechanisms are needed, such as those that can catalyze new investments and provide greater levels and sustainability of financing to improve waste management infrastructure and systems. For example, Closed Loop Oceans and the Closed Loop Fund is a partnership that leverages private sector financing to invest in building capacity through innovative and sustainable recycling technologies and approaches that advance the circular economy.

Echoing several others during this meeting, there are some successful examples of addressing marine litter at the regional level and this type of cooperation remains critical. For example, the UN Regional Seas Programmes are well poised to coordinate and implement work on the regional scale. For instance, in 2014 the Cartagena Convention for the protection of the wider Caribbean marine environment, in which the US participates, updated and adopted a marine litter strategy that is tailored to the problems in the Caribbean. Many other examples exist in other regional seas.

The U.S. believes that fora like the G7 and G20 can provide a valuable mechanism for raising awareness, establishing cooperation on technical matters, and engaging multiple sectors of society as Germany highlighted yesterday. We also appreciated many of Germany's points made in yesterday's intervention such as noting implementation gaps in existing international agreements, building on existing structures, and identifying additional scientific and data needs, etc.

Lastly, at the international level, we have had a number of positive experiences working on marine litter:

At the fifth International Marine Debris Conference, participants developed the Honolulu Strategy. It serves as a global framework for the prevention and management of marine debris and provides a menu of possible response options that may be applied at varying levels of implementation. There are over 170 potential actions for the prevention, management and removal of marine litter. [This Strategy provides a comprehensive list of potential actions to address marine litter and it serves as the foundation in guiding the implementation of the GPA and GPML.](#)

Finally, meetings like UNEA are a substantial part of the solution. For example, UNEA can be a place to launch partnerships with the scientific community, private sector, or governments to tackle a specific barrier to preventing and reducing marine litter. UNEA has a proven track record in helping to raise awareness of complex environmental problems.