

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

Barriers to Addressing Marine Litter (United States)

The United States is pleased to be here today to discuss the vital issue of Marine Litter and appreciates the efforts of UNEP to synthesize information and to governments and stakeholders around the room to address this issue. Marine litter is a critical and complex global problem without a one-size fits all solution. The legal, financial, technological and information barriers are different for different sources and pathways of marine litter, just as the barriers and solutions vary between countries. We hope that more time will be allocated to interactive dialogue as we have experts here ready to discuss details.

We would also like to highlight that marine litter can be made of a wide variety of materials, including plastics, metals, rubber, paper, and textiles. While plastics make up a large volume of marine litter and are vital to this conversation, we can't lose sight of the whole problem as our Co-Chair highlighted this morning. Like Canada, we see many barriers but will mainly focus on those related to waste management which the United States believes to be the primary overarching barrier. We think these barriers deserve consideration by UNEA for additional work and that we should develop options for all the significant barriers. We note that the mandate of the UNEP/EA.3/INF/5 report was on international and regional governance; therefore we have not focused substantively on what a previous UNEP report stated – that national waste management is the largest problem. I'll highlight some

With respect to Legal and Policy Barriers

We view the most significant legal barriers to be at the national or sub-national levels. The majority of marine litter comes from improper management of solid waste on land, which is, fundamentally, a national responsibility. We would suggest that the following legal barriers be explored first.

- Lack of effective national or sub national waste management frameworks, policies or legislation, or resources to address solid waste management
- Lack of national enforcement mechanisms, particularly for improper waste disposal.
- Lack of national comprehensive assessments of existing policies or legislative solutions to strengthen and enforce environmentally sound management of solid waste, including recycling, collection and disposal.
- Lack of incentives for waste prevention, such as:
 - incentives to change public behavior, (e.g. voluntary efforts such as bottle deposits and bag fees)
 - and recognition of schemes to promote private sector actions like corporate wide policies on waste management

We view these national legal barriers as both governance gaps and implementation gaps. Until nations have the ability to address these gaps domestically, we will not be able to make strides at the international level.

With respect to Financial Barriers,

Lifting financial barriers is one of the greatest challenges for countries attempting to address marine litter. Major financial barriers include:

- The need for better information on downstream (or secondary markets) for recovered materials, by assigning a value to the waste.
- The overall perception that waste materials have no intrinsic value. If waste can be viewed as a recyclable material that has monetary value, this can help facilitate behavioral change and incentivize recycling rates and reduce overall waste.
- Lack of understanding of the true cost of marine litter and externalities that should be considered in investment decisions. Although the 2014 UNEP “Valuing Plastics” and 2016 TruCost “Plastics and Sustainability” Reports start to help us understand these costs.
- There is also a lack of country assessments to review existing assets and deficiencies with regards to waste management in order to identify needs
- Lack of understanding of the extent of existing financial flows for solid waste management infrastructure from major lending institutions such as the World Bank and other Multilateral Development Banks.
- There is also the difficulty that Marine or Environment ministries have in accessing capital for waste management infrastructure.

With respect to Technological Barriers,

While there has been much technological progress made in the last several years, some significant technological barriers remain. These include:

- Lack of appropriate waste management infrastructure and models for local circumstances regarding
 - collection and transport of waste to dump sites
 - leaking of waste from collection sites
 - low recycling rates and inability to recycle many plastics
- Other technological barriers include the need for better packaging design to reduce waste and increase recyclability and reuse. We know that innovation is happening in the industry sector to improve packaging and that should be incentivized and recognized.
- Better technology is needed to collect and separate certain wastes, such as organics and plastics, as well as sort different categories of plastics to build/sustain secondary markets
- Further, recycling plastics may require large volumes necessitating regional economy of scale efforts to amass materials to a country that has a specific technology/facility.
- In addition to looking for new technological solutions this Expert Group can share best practices and ways to scale up effective solutions, particularly low-cost, high-

impact solutions, providing countries with a wide range of options for immediate action.

And Finally, Information Barriers

Solutions to the marine litter problem must be grounded in science and a clear understanding of the problem.

Many countries have not gathered basic information on their largest sources of waste or have not conducted comprehensive waste characterization studies. These studies are essential for basic knowledge of the problem and targeted solutions.

The 2014 UNEP “Valuing Plastics” Report aptly stated – “The first step towards good management is measurement, because without measurement, it is impossible to properly manage.” We fully agree and note that:

- There is a lack of reliable/robust data on the volumes, makeup, sources and pathways of marine litter to help countries identify and prioritize actions.
- There is a lack of consistent national, regional and global monitoring standards which hinders sound measurements of marine litter.
 - Creating standardized definitions and sharing reproducible, representative, accurate and harmonized methodologies are tangible action steps that will provide a grounding for global action on marine litter.
- There is a lack of understanding of ways to motivate behavior change and raise awareness about consumer choices and the impact of their choices.