



Distr.: General
24 October 2019
Original: English



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

**Ad Hoc Open-Ended Expert Group
on Marine Litter and Microplastics
Third meeting**

Bangkok, 18–22 November 2019

Item 6 (d) of the provisional agenda*

Introduction to activities under the mandate of the Ad Hoc Open-Ended Expert Group: Methodology for assessment of effectiveness

**Proposed methodology for analysis of the effectiveness of existing
and potential response options and activities in contributing towards
long-term elimination of discharge of marine plastic litter and
microplastics into the oceans**

Note by the Secretariat

1. The Ad Hoc Open-Ended Expert Group (AHEG) was established through the United Nations Environment Assembly resolution UNEP/EA.3/Res.7 paragraph 10. Its mandate was extended through resolution UNEP/EA.4/Res.6 paragraph 7, which also requested the group to, amongst other things, through subparagraph 7(d):

“Analyse the effectiveness of existing and potential response options and activities with regard to marine litter and microplastics at all levels to determine the contribution that they make to solving the global problem”

2. This document aims to provide a proposed methodology for the preparation of the analysis described above and is presented to the Third Meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-Ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics (AHEG 3) for discussion and consideration. The objective of the analysis is to ascertain the present focus of current and desired response options and activities and identify gaps in these across the four focus areas in order to inform the design of future initiatives. This analysis will be aligned with the stocktaking exercise mandated under UNEP/EA.4/Res.6 subparagraph 7(a) and described in Working Document UNEP/AHEG/2019/3/2. This proposed methodology may be revised based on feedback received from consultations at the AHEG 3 in order to ensure it adequately responds to the request set out in subparagraph 7(d).

* UNEP/AHEG/2019/3/1

Introduction

3. The proposed methodology has been prepared to cover existing and potential response options and actions to combat marine litter and microplastics by taking into account interventions across the life cycle of plastics as well as a source-to-sea perspective. It will primarily focus on the response options and activities by governments, due to their central role in regulating the life cycle of plastic goods and related services, and the private sector, for often being the main actors in operating the life cycle of plastics. In addition, response options previously identified in UNEP/AHEG/2018/1/INF/3: “Combating marine plastic litter and microplastics: an assessment of the effectiveness of relevant international, regional and subregional governance strategies and approaches” will be reconsidered and, where appropriate, Table 8 (p.100) of the report enclosed in UNEP/AHEG/2018/1/INF/3 can be updated.

4. The methodology for the analysis intends to determine the level to which current and desired actions address a number of criteria identified in paragraph 7 below across four focus areas, namely the lifecycle phases of plastics (sustainable production, sustainable consumption and waste management); environmental zones (air, land, freshwater and sea); geographic range (source-to-sea taking into account both the freshwater and salt water systems including areas beyond national jurisdiction); and compliance (assessed by the inclusion of reporting requirements). The results will ascertain the present focus of current and desired response options and activities and identify gaps in these across the four focus areas to inform the design of future initiatives.

5. The results will be summarized in tables indicating full or partial coverage of each criterion within the four focus areas. Each grouping of response options and activities will be individually summarised using a templated table to enable detailed analysis of current trends across the four proposed focus areas.

Approach and methodology for analysis

6. It should be noted that the analysis requested in subparagraph 7(d) of resolution UNEP/EA.4/Res.6 relates and benefits from the stocktaking exercise requested in subparagraph 7(a) of the same resolution, and the two will be developed in close coordination. Specifically, the stocktaking exercise undertaken in response to subparagraph 7(a) will provide the categories of response options and activities for the analysis. As per UNEP/AHEG/2019/3/2: “Approach for the stocktaking of existing activities and actions towards long-term elimination of discharges into the oceans, to reduce marine plastic litter and microplastics by relevant contributors”, the evidence base for the stocktaking exercise will be obtained through online submissions from stakeholder groups. This will take place in two phases: Phase 1 (October-November 2019) will primarily focus on activities and actions by governments and private sector, while Phase 2 (December 2019 – May 2020) will broaden the focus to all relevant contributors and will also inform the analysis of effectiveness.

7. The stocktaking exercise conducted in response to subparagraph 7(a) is based on three categories of activity: normative, evidential and capacity building. The online submissions provided for the stocktaking exercise will provide the primary information on current and potential response options and activities, the effectiveness of which will be analysed as per subparagraph 7(d). The focus areas and criteria will be assessed across the categories of activity as per the stocktaking exercise (normative, evidential, capacity building). The focus areas and criteria proposed are:

Focus area 1: Life cycle phases

a) Sustainable Production

Criterion 1: Eco design (e.g. durability, reuse, prevention of microplastics through abrasion & end-of-life treatment)

Criterion 2: Microplastics (Primary, secondary)

Criterion 3: Additives & associated chemicals-including legacy chemicals. Recycling facilities also addressed in this section.

b) Sustainable Consumption

Criterion 4: Reduction (e.g. taxes on products)

Criterion 5: Elimination (e.g. product bans)

Criterion 6: Waste prevention (e.g. guidelines and policies across sectors - household, public venues, commercial, industry sectors, government)

- c) Waste Management
Criterion 7: Environmentally sound treatment of wastes (e.g. waste hierarchy, separation/sorting, collection, storage, disposal, responsible trade)
Criterion 8: Mitigation and environmentally sound removal, including microplastics (e.g. wastewater, sewage sludge, fishing nets)
Criterion 9: Economic instruments to support waste management, including collection and transport (e.g. Extended Producer Responsibility, Polluter Pays, Advanced Recycling Fees) environment funds, pay-as-you-throw, deposit schemes)
Criterion 10: Disaster debris prevention and management (preparation and response)

Focus area 2: Environmental zones

- Criterion 11:* Air
Criterion 12: Land
Criterion 13: Freshwater
Criterion 14: Sea (including areas beyond national jurisdiction)

Focus area 3: Geographic range

- Criterion 15:* River basin management

Focus area 4: Compliance (Reporting)

- Criterion 16:* Reporting procedures in place across the three primary lifecycle phases

8. Through the platform developed for the stocktaking exercise of subparagraph 7(a), each submission will additionally capture the geographical scope of activities at the sub-national, national, regional and international levels. The geographical scope identified for each response option and activity will be reflected as additional criteria of effectiveness under subparagraph 7(d).

9. Subject to the design of the online survey of subparagraph 7(a), the following provides examples of some potential groupings of response options and activities that could inform the analysis of effectiveness:

- a) Normative:
- i. Inter-ministerial committees, inter-governmental and private sector partnerships;
 - ii. Policy instruments specific to waste prevention and management and marine litter specifically;
- b) Evidential:
- i. Monitoring standards and programmes;
 - ii. Reporting, including standards;
 - iii. Funds committed;
 - iv. Economic incentives and other stakeholder engagement programmes;
- c) Capacity Building:
- i. Awareness programmes focusing on 1) impact knowledge, 2) desired behaviour change or 3) regulatory frameworks (including for e.g. deposit return schemes);
 - ii. Sectoral guidelines;
 - iii. Workshops and conferences;
 - iv. Bilateral programmes.

10. The work undertaken in response to UNEP/EA.4/Res.6 subparagraph 7(b) (see documents UNEP/AHEG/2019/3/3 and UNEP/AHEG/2019/3/4) will also contribute to the collection of material for the work under subparagraph 7(d).

11. A detailed outline of the study and the methodology used can be found in UNEP/AHEG/2019/3/INF/3.

Questions

12. The UNEP/AHEG/2018/1/INF/3 assessment entitled “Combating marine plastic litter and microplastics: an assessment of the effectiveness of relevant international, regional and sub regional governance strategies and approaches” conducted a legal analysis of the relevant international and regional governance frameworks for combatting marine plastic litter and microplastics. This analysis carried out under subparagraph 7(d) seeks to undertake a different approach to analyzing the effectiveness of current frameworks. The stocktaking exercise conducted under subparagraph 7(a) will provide a valuable opportunity to carry out an analysis of current actions and activities, as well as planned/desired efforts, being carried out by governments and the private sector. Thus, a greater focus can be placed on the national and sub-national level than was possible in the UNEA-3 assessment found in UNEP/AHEG/2018/1/INF/3.

13. The AHEG may wish to comment on the methodology proposed to guide the secretariat in carrying out the mandate of subparagraph 7(d). In particular:

- a. The appropriateness of primarily basing the analysis of effectiveness on the findings of the stocktaking exercise.
- b. The usefulness of the four focus areas.
- c. The comprehensiveness of the criteria identified under each of the four focus areas.
- d. The feasibility of grouping response options and activities, where appropriate.