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on Marine Litter and Microplastics
Third meeting**

Bangkok, 18–22 November 2019

Item 3 of the provisional agenda¹

Update on the work and options of the ad hoc open ended expert group

Guidelines for the Development of Action Plans on Marine Litter

Note by the Secretariat

1. The United Nations Environment Assembly has stated, in resolution UNEP/EA.1/Res.6, paragraph 11:

“Requests the Executive Director to support countries, upon their request, in the development and implementation of national or regional action plans to reduce marine litter;”

In resolution UNEP/EA.2/Res.11, paragraph 11:

“Requests the Executive Director, within available resources, to assist Member States, especially developing countries, with emphasis on small island developing States and least developed countries, upon their request, in the development and implementation of national or regional measures and action plans; invites those in a position to do so to support such action; and recognizes that targeted measures in regions that are the largest sources of marine litter are especially important for the global reduction of marine plastic debris and microplastics;”

And in resolution UNEP/EA.3/Res.7, subparagraph 4(c):

“To develop and implement action plans for preventing marine litter and the discharge of microplastics; encouraging resource efficiency, and increasing collection and recycling rates of plastic waste and re-design and re-use of products and materials; and avoiding the unnecessary use of plastic and plastic containing chemicals of particular concern where appropriate;”

2. Pursuant to the above resolutions, UNEP has prepared Guidelines for the Development of Action Plans on Marine Litter.

3. An advance version of the report is presented in this document, without final editing.

¹ UNEP/AHEG/2019/3/1

Marine Litter: Guidelines for designing action plans

(Advance version)



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Marine Litter: Guidelines for designing action plans

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Acronyms and abbreviation

6Rs	Reduce, Redesign, Refuse, Reuse, Recycle and Recover
ALDFG	Abandoned, lost and otherwise discarded fishing gear
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEP	Caribbean Environment Programme
COBSEA	Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia
COP	Conference of the Parties
CPPS	Comisión Permanente del Pacifico Sur
EPR	Extended producer responsibility
GPA	Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities
GPML	Global Partnership on Marine Litter
HELCOM	Helsinki Commission - Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission
ICC	International Coastal Cleanup
IMAP	Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme
IMO	International Maritime Organization
LBA	Land-based activities
LBS	Land-based sources
MARPOL	International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships
MSFD	Marine Strategy Framework Directive
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NOWPAP	Northwest Pacific Action Plan
OSPAR	Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic
RFMO	Regional Fisheries Management Organisation
ROPME	Regional Organisation for Protection of the Marine Environment
RSCAP	Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans
SACEP	South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SCP	Sustainable consumption and production
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNEPMAP	Coordinating Unit for the Mediterranean Action Plan Secretariat to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols

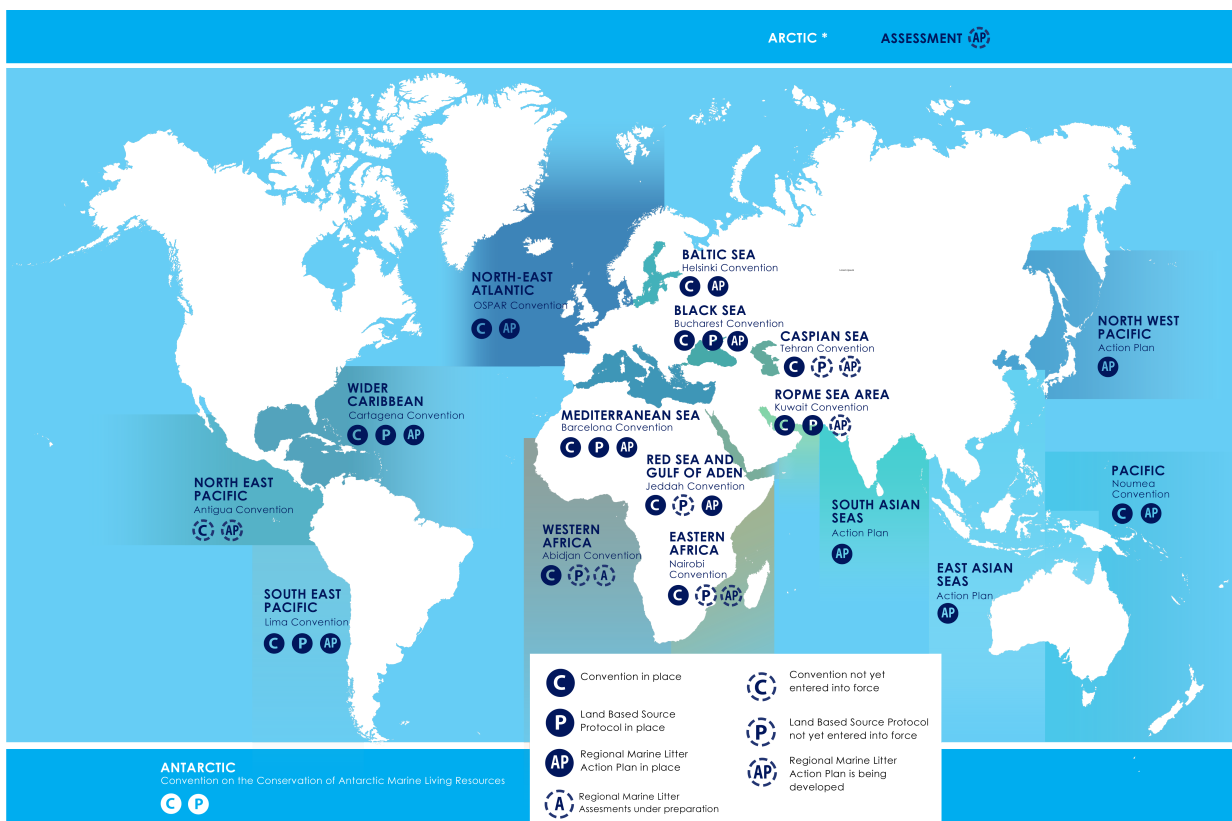


1. Background

Marine litter is increasingly an issue requiring urgent transboundary cooperation both at an international and a regional level. The issue is common to all of the world's oceans. Marine litter and microplastics is found on beaches, floating on the surface of the oceans, suspended in the water column, in sediments and settled on the seabed. Marine litter mostly results from mismanagement of plastic waste at various stages within the lifecycle of products. The processes that result in plastic waste entering the marine environment are broadly the same for all States, but significant differences can also be found.

At the regional level, legal frameworks relevant to the management of marine litter vary in the adoption of overarching conventions as well as protocols that aim to protect the marine environment from land-based sources of pollution. However, these protocols for land-based sources of pollution do not explicitly address marine litter. To a lesser degree, regional protocols have been adopted to regulate the dumping of wastes directly into the oceans for the Black Sea, the Pacific and the Mediterranean regions.¹ Voluntary action plans for the management of marine litter have been adopted by eleven Regional Seas² and in some regions, these are the only instruments with relevance to the issue.

Figure 1: Regional Seas binding and voluntary instruments



Under the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML), a number of Regional Seas programmes are hosting Regional Nodes, namely:

1. Caribbean - Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP),
2. Mediterranean - Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP),
3. Northwest Pacific - Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP),

¹ For further discussion on prohibitions on dumping of plastics into the marine environment, see UNEP, Combating marine plastic litter and microplastics: An assessment of the effectiveness of relevant international, regional and subregional governance strategies and approaches (UNEP/EA.3/INF/5) (2017) https://papersmart.unon.org/resolution/uploads/unea-3_mpl_assessment-2017oct05_unedited_adjusted.pdf,

² The exception is the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean, which is binding on Member States.

4. South Asian Seas - South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP).
5. South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)
6. East Asian Seas - Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA), [under development for consideration by COBSEA IGM]

The design of a marine litter action plan must consider two categories of measures:

- 1) Strategic measures assist in strengthening the position of the action plan within the regional institutional framework, promote the action plan as a tool to engage sectors and build capacity, and maintain momentum beyond the adoption of the plan. These are the focus of steps 2, 3, 4 & 10.
- 2) Implementation measures assist in driving action and progress at the regional and national level according to priorities agreed within the region. These are discussed in steps 1, 5-9.

As these guidelines highlight, the Regional Seas can strengthen global progress on the issue of marine litter by supporting regional implementation of measures agreed by member States. In addition, by assisting research in the region and providing access to appropriate forums on related subjects, Regional Seas can help ensure the regional marine litter action plan remains relevant and effective.

2. Developing a marine litter action plan

Marine litter action plans play an important role in 1) creating a platform for member countries to agree on the priority issues and activities in their region and 2) in guiding interventions at the regional level as well as the national level. Generally, it may be possible to adopt a broader scope of measures within an action plan and implementation can be stimulated in the near-term compared to the relative delay in adopting a binding instrument.

2.1. Step 1: Data collection and scientific assessment

Actions to address marine litter may be delayed due to inadequate science-based monitoring and assessment programmes. These would provide useful information to determine the most critical impacts of marine litter and guide action. However, in the absence of national and regional data there are tools that can assist in the development of marine litter action plans.

These tools include:

- Monitoring programmes⁹
- National source inventories.
- Current Regional Seas Marine Litter Action Plans (Baltic Sea, East Asian Seas, Mediterranean, Northeast Atlantic, Northwest Pacific, Pacific, Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, South Asian Seas, Southeast Pacific, Wider Caribbean).
- The G20 marine litter action plan (2017).
- The G20 Implementation Framework for Actions on Marine Plastic Litter (2019)
- G7 Action Plan to combat marine litter (2015)

Suggested steps to develop a marine litter action plan

- Step 1: Scientific assessment and data collection
- Step 2: Position the marine litter action plan
- Step 3: Determine the strategic approach
- Step 4: Stakeholder mapping and engagement
- Step 5: Decide the approach to selecting action measures
- Step 6: Design the monitoring program
- Step 7: Define implementation actions
- Step 8: Monitoring and review of implementation and action plan
- Step 9: Set review cycles for the action plan
- Step 10: Maintaining momentum

- The Honolulu Strategy (2011).
- Reviews on the regional status of marine litter (2007/2008) - Baltic Sea, Black Sea, Caspian Sea, East Asian Seas, Eastern Africa/WIO, Mediterranean, Northeast Atlantic, Northwest Pacific, Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, South Asian Seas, Southeast Pacific and the Wider Caribbean.
- Marine Litter Assessment in the Mediterranean, UNEP/MAP (2015).
- National and regional guidelines for solid waste management services.³
- Rapid source inventories and pathway analysis.

Developing action plans on marine litter through a national source inventory approach

In order to better inform and provide guidance on key intervention points, UNEP promotes the use of a data/evidence based approach where data availability or lack thereof will guide areas in need of action – this could include action in different areas including normative, evidential or capacity and technology related needs.

The national source inventory approach provides an integrated assessment of sources of marine plastic litter from plastic production through to waste management, calculating leakage to the environment including via wastewater and waterways, identification of accumulation zones in coastal regions, modelling of litter dispersion at sea, and in-situ monitoring to complement and validate the models and estimates.

The purpose of national source inventories will be to inform national and regional action plans for tackling marine litter, allowing policymakers to better design evidence-based, targeted, and effective interventions to reduce and eliminate the flow of litter and microplastics into the marine environment, including through legislative tools and incentives. The data collected will be harmonized within the Sustainable Development Goals framework and will ultimately aim to be shared through e.g. the World Environment Situation Room. Pilot projects are underway in Kenya and Seychelles.

2.1.1. Baseline information and targets

An action plan must be based on the best available baseline data. Consistent information is not available in all regions to assist in identifying sources, pathways or types of litter. Methods to obtain baseline data include:

- Hotspot assessments.
- Brand assessments to identify the most common brands found in marine litter.
- Engaging the public, including fishermen, using “big data” obtained through phone applications.⁴
- Annual International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) data, an Ocean Conservancy initiative.

2.1.1.1. Setting targets

There are agreed targets that have been harmonized across regions as well as common methodologies for determining such targets. Targets may include:

- Defined pollution volumes or ecosystem impacts based on rigorous scientific research,
- Broader percentage reductions for visible plastic pollution,
- Agreed timeframes to achieve particular actions.

Where data is insufficient to set targets, the following may act as a guide:

- Global pollution reduction targets and declarations, e.g. G7 and G20 marine litter action plans, UNEA-3 resolution on marine litter and microplastics (UNEP/EA.3/Res.7, Paragraph 4).
- UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Relevant global and regional industry associations, e.g. International Solid Waste Association (ISWA), the Association of Plastic Recyclers and the Plastics Division of the American Chemistry Council (ACC).

A marine litter action plan should consider including the following sections regarding gathering and use of technical information:

- Regional and national marine litter monitoring programmes;
- Guidelines (sectoral, marine litter monitoring, removal);
- Reporting, including timeframes and templates;
- Regional indicators;
- Reduction targets and timelines; and
- Regional or global databases.

³ See for example Asian Development Bank, Integrated Solid Waste Management for Local Governments: A Practical Guide (2017) <<https://www.adb.org/documents/solid-waste-mgt-local-gov>>; Phillips, W. and Thorne, E., Municipal solid waste management in the Caribbean: A benefit-cost analysis, ECLAC – Studies and Perspectives series – The Caribbean – No. 22 (2013) <https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/5053/1/S2012122_en.pdf>; USAID, Environmental Issues and Best Practices for Solid Waste Management. Solid Waste Collection and Disposal Systems. Environmental Guidelines for the USAID Latin America and Caribbean Bureau (2018) <http://www.usaidgems.org/Documents/EGSSAALAC/English_Resources/LAC-Guidelines-5-solid-waste-mgmt.pdf>

⁴ For example, the Australian Marine Debris Initiative can be downloaded from the Apple Store and the Android Play Store.

For an in-depth discussion on setting regional indicators and targets, refer to the 2014 UNEP report *Measuring Success: Indicators for the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans*⁵

It is important that the regional action plan be realistic rather than overly ambitious, particularly in regions where a plan is being developed for the first time. There is opportunity to adapt the plan to increase scope and targets as new and emerging issues and priorities are identified and as momentum builds in the region in line with documented successes.

2.2. Step 2: Position the marine litter action plan

Regional marine litter action plans may be adopted within legally binding or voluntary frameworks. In the latter, political buy-in can be encouraged if a selection of implementation options is provided instead of a prescriptive list. However, the reach of an action plan adopted at the regional or national level can be broadened in order to assist member States in meeting other international and regional commitments. These include:

- Implementation of SDG 14.1 and other relevant goals and targets.
- Convention on Biological Diversity and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets.
- Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP).

An action plan can incorporate guiding principles and approaches that provide the remit to engage in fora that discuss upstream activities, such as:

- The precautionary principle/approach,
- The polluter pays principle,
- The ecosystem approach,
- Public participation,
- Stakeholder engagement,
- Lifecycle assessment,
- Extended Producer Responsibility and
- Extended Stakeholder Responsibility.

Examples of targets that can be considered for inclusion in a regional action plan:

- Development of national action plans by member States.
- Development of regional guidelines (e.g. sectoral, monitoring).
- Reduction in the overall amount of litter present in the marine environment or in any of its compartments (beach, seafloor, sediment, water column) or biota.
- Adoption of clean-up and awareness programmes such as Adopt-a-Beach and Blue Flag certifications.
- Target implementation dates (can be used partly as an indicator of success, but targets should be implemented once lead countries have determined the necessary actions, and when adopting guidelines or recommendations in order specify how to measure success).
- Beach litter monitoring may provide a breakdown of the problem into specific issues that can be augmented with additional indicators, such as plastic particles in fulmars, microparticles in fish, etc.
- Ingested litter (requires a species common across the region).

⁵ UNEP, *Measuring Success: Indicators for the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans* (2014): <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/10940>

2.3. Step 3: Determine the strategic approach

The regional action plan should be viewed as a tool to build capacity both at the regional and national level. It also provides a mechanism for agreeing priority actions at the regional level and encourages consistency in implementation, monitoring and reporting. Designing the action plan for tracking and reporting of progress and the value added to the region can provide multiple benefits, particularly in applications for financial support.

A clear distinction is made in more recent marine litter action plans between actions to be achieved at the regional level and actions to be encouraged at the national level. Actions to be engaged in at a regional level include:

- Bringing issues to the attention of the relevant institutions within whose remit action falls, such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO),
- Mobilising technical and financial resources as well as support the development and functioning of regional nodes and platforms,
- Convening of regional inter-governmental meetings, working groups and expert group meetings convened to discuss specific issues, such as monitoring protocols,
- Prioritising actions and providing focus from which progress can be assessed.

The regional action plan can strengthen funding applications by States, other regional institutions and fisheries bodies through illustration of the following:

- Prioritised actions at the regional and national level,
- Government agencies and departments with clear responsibility for particular components of marine litter,
- A Regional institutional framework with capacity to support specific project components and deliverables,
- Reports that provide clear progress in addressing marine litter,
- National action plans that support the actions agreed at the regional level,
- Data gaps and research requirements.

2.4. Step 4: Stakeholder mapping and engagement

Marine litter is not only an issue of inappropriate consumer behavior or inadequate municipal solid waste management. Engaging all the relevant stakeholders involved in the generation and management of marine litter throughout the lifecycle of plastics can begin during the scoping exercise discussed above.

It is important to engage key government agencies early and provide education on issues, e.g. waste management authorities and ministries of environment. Engaging early with industry can achieve results prior to adoption of regional action plan and lead to ongoing engagement and collaboration. This includes tourism, fisheries, plastics and retail associations.

Stakeholder mapping assists in understanding the positioning of the action plan within the region, the goals of the plan and the role of the Regional Seas programmes in accomplishing these goals. It provides opportunity to discuss partnerships and integration of activities, e.g. monitoring, research, reports or other specific issues. Stakeholder mapping can be repeated periodically to ensure changes are captured.

To conduct a stakeholder mapping exercise:

- Identify stakeholders in the region that are engaged in the topic,

- Gather information from, amongst others, inter-governmental workshop attendee lists, national focal points, publications and broader web searches. Surveys or a workshop can further refine information on the current activities of stakeholders, their level of engagement and their prioritisation of marine litter within future work strategies.
- Map stakeholders to identify overlap, opportunities for integration, as well as possibilities for upstream cooperation.
- Further analysis could assess the capacity and technology needs of stakeholders.

The action plan should reflect the institutional infrastructure of the region and clarify the joint activities already underway.

Examples of industry sectors and associations to consider for early engagement:

- Waste collectors
- Material recovery facilities (MRFs)
- Recycling facilities
- Plastics manufacturers & converters
- Brand owners
- Cosmetics
- Textiles
- Retailers
- Hospitality
- Tourism (land and sea)
- Private marinas
- Agriculture

The regional connections built during the negotiation phase of the action plan can be lost after adoption. It is therefore important to establish a mechanism to ensure ongoing communication channels between all stakeholders in order to maintain momentum. Where possible, a Regional Action Plan Project Coordinator can be appointed to assist.

2.5. Step 5: Decide the approach to selecting action measures

Once the member States of a region agree to develop an action plan, two broad approaches have been used, namely a national approach or a broader stakeholder approach.

National approach:

- Often involves a non-negotiated document that collates information provided by member States.
- Surveys are designed to guide the information requested from member States.
- The resulting national information is collated by the Regional Seas programmes.

A broader stakeholder approach:

- Includes multiple institutions, sectors and other actors that are invited to contribute to the initial regional meetings, i.e. adopts a more open process.
- Usually requires greater financial and human resources at the Secretariat level than the national approach.
- Can add complexity to the intergovernmental negotiating process.
- Should allow for greater opportunity to capture a wider range of the issues, players and potential responses, potentially contributing to a more robust action plan.
- Requires clear parameters to be set to ensure the contributions from a wider range of stakeholders remain relevant and to streamline negotiations, particularly when agreeing on targets.

2.6. Step 6: Design the monitoring program

A measurement of effectiveness of a regional action plan is the establishment of a coordinated regional survey and/or monitoring programme. A measured reduction in marine litter can indicate success at the national level as well as the regional level.

A two-year project was undertaken by the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP) to provide global harmonized monitoring methodologies for marine litter and microplastics.⁶

National scientific surveys can provide an assessment of the situation at a point in time, whereas ongoing monitoring or repeat surveys can provide information on the progress made against regional marine litter action plans.

Surveys provide a rapid snap-shot at a point in time and can include:

- Beach litter volumes and type.
- Policies adopted at the national level.
- Institutional structures.
- Volume of waste produced and recycled.

Ongoing monitoring provides a measure of effectiveness against agreed targets and indicators. The Regional Seas Indicators Working Group adopted a set of 22 core indicators including for marine litter.⁷ This toolbox can also be considered when preparing an indicator-based monitoring programme at the regional level. Examples of indicators can be found in the Mediterranean, the Northeast Atlantic and the Wider Caribbean regions. An example of a regional monitoring programme can be found in the Mediterranean.

2.7. Step 7: Define implementation actions

A basic element of any regional action plan should be the listing of agreed actions that target priority issues. These may be separated into actions to be taken at the regional level and voluntary actions to be taken at the national level. It may be necessary to differentiate those actions that address issues under the mandate and competence of other regional and international organisations. Examples include the FAO and IMO. The agreed actions can then also be ranked according to priority, both at a regional and a national level.

Elements that support implementation of a marine litter action plan include:

- Regional and international cooperation for implementation of each action.
- Reporting on progress of each action and the regional action plan as a whole.
- Identification of knowledge gaps and research requirements (national and regional).
- Stakeholder, NGO and civil society involvement in the implementation of actions.
- Sharing of information (inter- and intra-regional).
- Education, outreach and public awareness.
- Training and capacity building.

Actions that will assist in managing **land-based** sources of marine litter include:

- Set priority actions to be taken at national and regional level.
- Develop national action plans that integrate marine litter into solid waste management services, including stormwater and wastewater treatment, reduce production of solid waste, provide for natural disasters and extreme weather event preparedness and integrate the 6R hierarchy (Reduce, Redesign, Refuse, Reuse, Recycle and Recover).
- Develop national monitoring programmes.
- Conduct waste classification and brand audits.

⁶ GESAMP (2019). Guidelines on the monitoring and assessment of plastic litter and microplastics in the ocean (Kershaw P.J., Turra A. and Galgani F. editors), (IMO/FAO/UNESCO-IOC/UNIDO/WMO/IAEA/UN/UNEP/UNDP/ISA Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection). Rep. Stud. GESAMP No. 99, 130p. Available at: <http://www.gesamp.org/publications/guidelines-for-the-monitoring-and-assessment-of-plastic-litter-in-the-ocean>

⁷ UNEP, Regional Seas Core Indicators Set (UNEP/WBRS.18/INF9) (2016) http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/11078/wb18_inf9_rs_indicators.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

- Research sources and pathways for litter to reach the marine environment, including microplastics.
- Identify knowledge gaps and research requirements, such as sources, pathways and fates of marine litter & microplastics, accumulation hotspots.
- Develop guidelines and particularly for large industries impacting the region, e.g. tourism.
- Engage industry on best practices across all sectors and promote Extended Producer Responsibility, Polluter Pays Principle.
- Adopt legal instruments, such as bans/taxes on recyclable plastics in landfill (create supply), green procurement policies (create demand), bans on single-use plastics.
- Adopt economic instruments, such as container deposit refund schemes, pay-as-you-throw schemes, tax on single-use items.
- Strengthen end-markets for plastic waste.
- Ensure penalties adequately deter littering and illegal industry discharge.

Actions that will assist in managing **sea-based** sources of marine litter:

- Prioritise actions to be taken at national and regional level.
- National action plans and national monitoring programmes must integrate waste from maritime sectors.
- Ratification and enforcement of MARPOL Annex V, London Protocol, UNCLOS and CBD.
- Ensure penalties are sufficiently high to deter discharge and dumping.
- Provision of adequate port reception facilities.
- Collaborate with IMO on implementation of MARPOL Annex V, incl. inspections, garbage management plans.
- Collaboration with Regional Fisheries Management Organizations.
- Consider the no-special-fee or 'reasonable cost' for disposal at port reception facilities.
- Review adequacy of port reception facilities and develop regional standards.
- Promote awareness & behavior change through Fishing-for-litter programmes.
- Collaborate with FAO on the marking of fishing gear.
- Develop guidelines for large industries impacting the region, e.g. fisheries, aquaculture, tourism and codes of practice for professional seafarers.
- Determine best management practices to prevent loss of equipment from fishing & aquaculture and promote reporting of lost fishing gear.
- Identify knowledge gaps and research requirements, e.g. sources, paths and fates of marine litter & fishing gear from vessels, accumulation hotspots; areas of importance for biodiversity, risk to the use of coastal and marine resources/assets/fisheries.
- Investigate markets for plastic waste from maritime sectors.

Actions for **cleanup and removal** of marine litter:

- Prioritise actions to be taken at national and regional level.
- Explore awareness through action, e.g. beach cleans (ICC), Adopt-a-Beach, Fishing-for-Litter.
- Seek opportunities to engage other ocean ambassadors and fundraise through cleanup activities.
- Establish regional partnerships for larger projects requiring significant resources, e.g. removal of fishing gear.

Actions for **awareness-raising and outreach** actions:

- Prioritise actions to be taken at national and regional level.
- Enhance public and industry awareness, e.g. Adopt-a-Beach and Blue Flag certification., Fishing-for-litter, #CleanSeas campaign.
- Develop region-specific information pamphlets to raise awareness of impacts in the region, promote anti-littering and sorting of household waste.
- Target high-impact industries, e.g. fisheries, tourism, hospitality.

- Raise Government awareness and assist national campaigns.
- Develop an online platform to share monitoring data, best practices, legislation and lessons learned.
- Implement high visibility demonstration projects, e.g. litter traps/booms in rivers, rubbish bins along high-use waterways and estuaries.

2.8. Step 8: Monitoring and review

When considering options for tracking the effectiveness of the regional action plan, it is important to distinguish between regional measures and voluntary national measures. Specific targets with measurable indicators can provide clarity and options for tracking the effectiveness of the action plan. This will inform the review process of the plan itself as well as review of measures within the plan, in turn providing support for potential revisions.

At the regional level, additional factors that contribute to the overall effectiveness of the regional action plan include:

- Platforms to enhance political commitment and regional collaboration.
- Partnership among different stakeholders to work together with a common/coherent approach towards a common goal (e.g. the GPML regional nodes such as the Regional Cooperation Platform on Marine Litter in the Mediterranean).
- Adoption of national marine litter action plans.
- Development of regional guidelines and information material.
- Regional agreement on monitoring indicators and national monitoring programmes (in place or in preparation) to assess and compare the situation throughout the region.
- Coherence and harmonization of monitoring approaches/methodologies.
- Expanded upstream engagement e.g. Sustainable Consumption and Production Action Plan.

Reporting and tracking of the regional action plan can be enhanced through the design of reporting templates at the regional level. These should differentiate between compliance-progress reports and monitoring reports. Opportunity should also be provided for member States to volunteer information on implementation difficulties. Where lead countries have been appointed, they could report on specific tasks for which they have taken the lead.

National action plans could include the following activities:

- Nominate a single authority with responsibility for marine litter and promote inter-ministerial cooperation, e.g. workshops, that include, inter alia, stormwater, river and catchment management authorities, port authorities, etc.
- Review national legislation for prevention, monitoring and enforcement practices, including giving effect to MARPOL Annex V, the London Protocol and relevant regional instruments.
- Identify and engage all relevant stakeholders.
- Integrate marine litter into waste management services, including rural areas and informal settlements as well as severe weather preparedness.
- Promote sustainable consumption and production practices in public and private sectors.
- Enhance end-markets for plastic waste through, inter alia, establishment of extended producer responsibility programmes, procurement policies for recycled content and landfill taxes/bans.
- Establish national monitoring programmes and inventories that track associated costs of solid waste management.
- Conduct waste profiling and brand audits of marine litter and plastic waste to identify priority items and sectors to target (public and private), including tourism and hospitality sectors, fishing sectors, agriculture, construction and demolition, etc.
- Promote adoption of municipal action plans and source-to-sea prevention strategies.

- Promote research, including socio-economic impacts of marine litter and considering vulnerable communities.
- Promote awareness programs, including Adopt-a-Beach and Fishing-for-Litter programs.
- Prioritise activities, with timelines where appropriate, according to land-based sources, sea-based sources, removal and awareness-raising activities.
- Promote bilateral collaboration with neighbouring States.

2.9. Step 9: Set review cycles for the action plan

Determining a periodic review cycle to assess the progress of implementation at the regional and national level will assist in ensuring the effectiveness and relevance of action plans. This would firstly require an agreed methodology for measuring effectiveness of implementation measures as well as of the plan itself.

A marine litter action plan can be reviewed on two levels:

1. Implementation actions
 - Where appropriate, provide timelines for implementation,
 - Review progress of each action at national and regional levels,
 - Assessment must be supported by national and regional reports.
2. Overall effectiveness of the action plan
 - Measured against regional targets and indicators,
 - Requires the establishment of a harmonised regional monitoring & reporting programme.

A review process provides opportunity to assess the relevance of the action plan to regional issues but also changing global priorities. Shortfalls in implementation can also indicate areas in need of further research, funding or collaboration.

2.10. Step 10: Maintaining momentum

Efforts at the regional level remain critical to maintaining engagement and cooperation. Fundamental to this is a platform for intergovernmental meetings. Inter-sessional meetings to discuss particular topics can further facilitate progress and informal meetings allow for multiple stakeholder participation. The regional nodes of the GPML play an important role in this regard.

In addition to meetings, maintaining momentum at the regional level can be achieved through the following strategies:

- Establishing national focal points, assisted by national inter-ministerial working groups.
- Promote and aid with the development of marine litter national action plans to stimulate short- to medium term implementation strategies,
- Develop a reporting programme to promote ongoing action at the national level,
- Where appropriate, adopt the 'lead country' approach to champion action on specific measures and drive national implementation,
- Establish regional nodes under the GPML, possibly co-hosted with a regional fisheries body to further the coordinating role of the Regional Seas programme with governments, industry, academia and civil society,
- Encourage regional projects to engage States in addressing selected actions.

3. Summary and conclusion

Regional action plans for marine litter are flexible instruments as per their voluntary status.⁸ This can present challenges for ongoing engagement and implementation, potentially limiting the overall effectiveness and success of the action plan. To enhance the success of the plan in addressing the issue of marine litter, the Regional Seas programmes should seek to achieve the following:

- A strong framework at the institutional, regulatory, and operational level.
- Involvement of stakeholders:
 - Engage early with government (governments must remain the primary focus).
 - Engage early with industry associations e.g. shipping, fisheries, tourism and the plastics industry.
- Greater options and scope for robust resource mobilization.
- A broader reach across sectors. Action should not be limited to one category of interventions, i.e. focusing only on marine litter without mainstreaming the issue across other initiatives (e.g. commitments for biodiversity and sustainable production and consumption).
- Build on the global priorities and trends as well as commitments already agreed.

These guidelines have highlighted the role a regional marine litter action plan can play in strengthening action at both the national and regional levels. By engaging States in the initial design process, regional priority issues and actions are identified and agreed. This national approach is fundamental to engagement by members on the issue, indicating political will to progress national solutions that target regional priorities. A regional marine litter action plan that is designed to track progress and demonstrate a solid regional institutional infrastructure to support successful implementation of projects will attract and guide donor investment. Broadening the reach of the action plan into relevant forums and regular review of progress will assist in ensuring these instruments remain relevant and effective.

⁸ As noted, the exception is the legally binding marine litter action plan of the Mediterranean region.

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