



Distr.: Limited
14 March 2019
Original: English



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

**United Nations Environment Assembly of the
United Nations Environment Programme
Fourth session**
Nairobi, 11–15 March 2019

Marine plastic litter and microplastics*

The United Nations Environment Assembly,

Noting with concern that the high and rapidly increasing levels of marine litter, including plastic litter and microplastics represent a serious environmental problem at a global scale, negatively affecting marine biodiversity, ecosystems, animal well-being, societies, livelihoods, fisheries, maritime transport, recreation and tourism, and economies,

Noting also that microplastics added into products or generated during their lifecycle, are found along the food chain and that there is concern about their potential to negatively affect human health including food safety and that, hence, those aspects require further examination,

Stressing the importance of long-term elimination of discharge of litter and microplastics to the oceans and of avoiding detriment to marine ecosystems and the human activities dependent on them from marine litter and microplastics, as stated by the United Nations Environment Assembly in its resolution 3/7,

Stressing also the importance of *the* prevention and reduction of marine litter including plastic litter and microplastics from both land and sea-based sources to Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development goals,

Stressing further the importance of a more sustainable management of plastics throughout their lifecycle in order to increase sustainable consumption and production patterns, including but not limited to circular economy and other sustainable economic models¹, and the importance of environmentally sound waste management, resource efficiency, the 3Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle), sustainable materials management innovation of related technologies, environmentally sound clean-up of marine plastic litter, and international cooperation, to most effectively prevent pollution from marine litter including plastic litter and microplastics,

Stressing as well the urgent need to strengthen the science-policy interface at all levels and to do more to support science based approaches, improve understanding of the fate, distribution and impacts of marine litter including plastic litter and microplastics on the marine environment and promote local, national, regional and global action on preventing and eliminating discharge of litter, including plastic litter and microplastics into the marine environment,

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

¹ UNEP/EA.4/L.2 Innovative Pathways to Achieve Sustainable Consumption and Production.

Underlining the urgent need to consider strengthened science/policy interface, global coordination, cooperation and governance to more effectively implement the United Nations Environment Assembly resolutions 1/6, 2/11 and 3/7,

Noting important developments to explore options within the mandates of relevant existing international agreements and organizations to address marine litter, in particular;

(a) The recommendations of the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) under the Basel Convention to its Conference of the Parties at its 14th meeting to consider further options under the Convention including establishing a Partnership on Plastic Waste;

(b) The adoption of an action plan by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Marine Environment Protection Committee, supported by the London Protocol and London Convention, to reduce marine plastic litter from ships;

Recognizing the work of Regional Seas Conventions and Programmes for the protection of the marine and coastal environment and reiterating its invitation on relevant international and regional organizations and conventions to increase their action to prevent and reduce marine litter, including plastic litter and microplastics and their harmful effects, and coordinate where appropriate to achieve this end,

Acknowledging the need for quality data and effective monitoring of land and sea based sources, quantities, fate and impact of marine litter including plastic litter and microplastics, as well as potential impact on human health, through harmonized methodologies, which enables better and more effective actions,

Noting the framework document for the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML) decided by its Steering Committee October 2018, outlining the purpose, function and organization of the GPML as a platform for all stakeholders for bottom-up, voluntary cooperation on activities such as sharing of experiences, information and match-making for project cooperation.

Taking into account the outcome of the Ad Hoc Open-Ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics established by the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly pursuant to resolution UNEP/EA/3/7 operative paragraph 10, particularly the need for increasing coherence, coordination and synergies between existing mechanisms and to enhance cooperation and governance with a view to better address marine litter and microplastics challenges at local, national, regional and global levels,

Mindful of the particular responsibility of United Nations Environment Programme pursuant to its 1972 mandate to keep under review the world environmental situation in order to ensure that emerging environmental problems with international significance receive appropriate and adequate consideration by Governments,

1. *Calls* upon Member States and other actors at local, national, regional and international levels, private sector, civil society, academia, and other stakeholders to address the problem of marine litter and microplastics prioritizing a whole life cycle approach and resource efficiency, building on appropriate existing initiatives and instruments, and supported by and grounded in science, international cooperation, and multi-stakeholder engagement;

2. *Requests* the UNEP Executive Director, within available resources and benefiting from the work of relevant existing mechanisms, to immediately strengthen scientific and technological knowledge with regard to marine litter including marine plastic litter and microplastics through the following activities:

(a) Convening existing relevant science advisory initiatives with input from the Member States, as appropriate, to provide input into the activities under paragraph 3 and 7;

(b) Compiling available scientific and other relevant data and information to prepare an assessment on sources, pathways, and hazards of litter including plastic litter and microplastic pollution and its presence in the rivers and oceans, scientific knowledge about adverse effects on ecosystems, potential adverse effects on human health and environmentally sound technology innovations;

(c) Recommending indicators to harmonize monitoring, report and assess methodologies, taking into account the key sources of marine litter including plastic litter and microplastics in cooperation with relevant international organizations;

(d) Gathering information with a view to inform policies and action on environmentally sound technological innovations, options and measures for reducing risks of discharges of litter including plastic litter and microplastics to the marine environment taking into account the whole life-cycle of plastics, in support of local, national, regional and global action;

3. *Decides* to strengthen coordination and cooperation by establishing, within available resources, and building on existing initiatives, a multi-stakeholder platform within UNEP, to take immediate action towards the long-term elimination of discharges of litter and microplastics through a life cycle approach, into the oceans. This may include the following functions:

(a) Serving as a forum for governments, industry, academia, civil society, and other stakeholders to share experiences and coordinate action, either on a regular or ad hoc basis;

(b) Serving as a repository for: assessments on how land and sea-based sources of marine litter including plastic litter and microplastics are addressed at national, regional and international levels, conceptual and practical guidance materials for governments, organizations, and private entities to address aspects of marine litter; and current action plans, management practices, and guidelines for enabling, enhancing and supporting action to prevent discharge of litter, including plastic litter and microplastics, into the marine environment;

(c) Raising global awareness of the issue with a wide variety of audiences, such as governments, policy-makers, resource managers, educators, private sector entities, and the public;

(d) Establishing and maintaining a database of technical and scientific information related to marine litter, such as inventories of discharges to the marine environment, scientific studies, and innovations to address marine litter;

(e) Promoting collaboration among relevant existing science mechanisms to facilitate access to available scientific data and information to disseminate sound scientific practices, such as guidelines for the sampling and analysis of marine macro-plastics and microplastics and to improve policy relevance of research;

(f) Promoting action in Regional Seas Conventions and Programmes, within available resources, to address marine litter through action plans, protocols, partnerships, and other activities;

4. *Recalls* its resolution on Marine plastic litter and microplastics (UNEP/EA.2/11) and further invite member states in close collaboration with the private sector to:

(a) Reduce the discharge of microplastics into the marine environment including through phase-out of products that contain microplastics, where possible;

(b) Foster innovation of product design to reduce secondary microplastic release from land- and sea-based sources and improve waste management where needed;

(c) Prevent losses of primary microplastics, especially pre-production pellets (flakes and powders), to prevent their spills into the environment, across the whole manufacturing and supply chain;

5. *Requests* the ED, through its 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, to elaborate guidelines on plastic use and production in order to inform consumers, including on standards and labels, to incentivize businesses and retailers to commit to sustainable practices and products, and to support governments to promote the use of information tools and incentives to foster sustainable consumption and production;

6. *Invites* all Member States, the relevant organizations of the United Nations system, and other relevant international and regional organizations, as well as, the private sector, civil society, non-governmental organizations and individuals, on every relevant occasion, including by utilizing the opportunities, such as the “World Environment day” and “World Oceans Day”:

(a) To consider their role in the contribution to address marine litter including plastic litter and microplastics;

(b) To raise awareness of the importance of and to encourage sustainable consumption and production in line with resolution XX on Innovative Pathways to Achieve Sustainable Consumption and Production with regard to products likely to generate marine litter, including plastic litter and microplastics;

(c) To promote environmentally sound waste management and marine plastic litter recovery in line with resolution 3/7 paragraph 4h;

7. *Decides* to extend until UNEA-5 the mandate of the Ad Hoc Open-Ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics created by resolution UNEP/EA.3/res.7, building on its previous work, to:

(a) Take stock of existing activities and actions towards long-term elimination of discharges into the oceans, to reduce marine plastic litter and microplastics by governments, relevant global and regional instruments and international organizations, the private sector, Non-Governmental organizations and other relevant contributors;

(b) Identify technical and financial resources or mechanisms for supporting countries in addressing marine plastic litter and microplastics;

(c) Encourage partnerships as well as increased cooperation in relations to the prevention of marine litter including plastic litter and microplastics that undertake activities, such as development of source inventories, improvement of waste management, awareness raising, and promotion of innovation;

(d) Analyse the effectiveness of existing and potential response options and activities on marine litter and microplastics at all levels to determine the contribution in solving the global problem;

8. *Invites* the Environment Management Group (EMG) to engage in and contribute to the Ad Hoc Open-ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics by providing inter alia a mapping of all relevant United Nations agencies, programmes, initiatives and expertise with relevance to marine litter including plastic litter and microplastics;

9. *Requests* the Executive Director to report on the progress of the implementation of this resolution to the Fifth United Nations Environment Assembly.
