Bangkok 3R Declaration[1]
Towards
Prevention of Plastic Waste Pollution through 3R and Circular Economy

Preamble

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – and the underlying Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the Member States of the United Nations, represent a plan of action for people, the planet and prosperity and reflect the commitment of the countries to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path. Through adoption of the Agenda, the Member States called for, among others, a world in which consumption and production patterns and use of all natural resources are sustainable. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs not only call for equitable economic growth, but also provide an important political and implementation framework to implement 3R (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) and resource efficiency measures to achieve circular economic development and sufficiency economy.

The Asia and the Pacific region is the most rapidly urbanizing and industrializing region in the world. Though the unprecedented scale and speed of the urban industrial transformation coupled with enhanced production and consumption have lifted millions of people out of poverty, this presents challenges for the countries in the sustainable environmental management of their natural and ecological resources. At the same time, the growing volume and diversification of various waste streams have compounded these challenges. Waste management in many Asia-Pacific countries must deal with increasingly complex waste streams including industrial waste, electronic waste, plastics in coastal and marine environments, construction and demolition waste, and chemicals that add critical dimensions to the region's sustainability.

The policy and scientific community in the region have recognized the large challenges of resource supply security, increasing waste and pollution, and climate change as critical constraints to future growth and rising material standards of living in the region. One of such critical challenges is the rising level of plastics in the coastal and marine environment, in particular the presence of microplastics (diameter <5 mm) in oceans and inland waters which are unintentionally ingested by many aquatic animals, posing a serious threat to the food safety of fishery and aquaculture products, and thereby affecting both human health and food security.

Today plastic materials are present in nearly all spheres of modern life, starting from simple packaging, clothes containing synthetic fibres, containers, drinking bottles and vehicle parts and tyres to various life-supporting medical equipment. Their manufacture, use and

[1] Bangkok 3R Declaration is a good-will, voluntary and legally non-binding.

discharge have significantly increased the amount of plastic waste, including plastic marine litter in oceans which is detrimental to the ecosystems, biodiversity, fishing and tourism industry and potentially human health. When improperly managed, plastics can make their way into the aquatic environment by land disposal or direct runoff and disintegrate into macro (> 25 mm), meso (>5 mm) and micro plastic (< 5 mm). Plastic, predominantly single use plastic, makes up approximately 80-85% of the total number of marine litter items, measured through beach counts. At the same time, once leaked into the marine environment, valuable plastic materials that could have been brought back into the economy through implementation of 3R (reduce, reuse and recycle) and circular economic development principle are also lost.

Unless well-coordinated preventive, collective and corrective measures are taken at the national, international, business and consumer levels to discourage the use of single-use plastics, and encourage the use of environmental friendly alternative materials, recycling and the adoption of sustainable production and consumption practices in using plastics and managing plastic pollution, and promote environmentally sound waste management on the whole stage of the collection, treatment and disposal to minimize the leakage of plastic waste into the ocean, and adoption of Extended Producer Responsibility principle for packaging products. Plastics pollution will pose a serious challenge to the sustainability of the costal and marine ecosystem of the region. Given that the problem of marine litter is also transboundary in nature, joint international actions at the sub-regional and regional level are needed to promote 3R and circular economic development principles so as to prevent and reduce plastic marine litter, and work towards achievement of the SDG 14.

Declaration

We, the representatives of Asia-Pacific countries[2], city government representatives, international organizations, non-government organizations, private sector and industry groups, and professionals in the field of 3R, circular economy and waste management, having met at the Ninth Regional 3R Forum in Asia and the Pacific, held in Bangkok, the Kingdom of Thailand, from 4 to 6 March 2019,

Reaffirming our commitments towards achieving *the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and the underlined *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*, including Goal 14 which calls for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development and its Target 14.1 which calls for the prevention and significant reduction of

[2] Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Federated States of Micronesia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kiribati, Republic of Korea, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Palau, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Somoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Thailand, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Viet Nam.

marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution,

Reaffirming our commitments to implement the *10-Year Framework of Programmes (10 YFP) on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns* in line with SDG 12, including all its underlined Targets which call for inter alia achieving the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international frameworks, and significantly reduce their release to air, water and soil in order to minimize their adverse impacts on human health and the environment, and substantially reducing waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse, and achieving sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources,

Noting the United Nations Environment Programme initiative on marine litter, in particular the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (GPA), which aims to reduce significantly the amount of litter reaching the marine and coastal environment by the prevention or reduction of the generation of solid waste and improvements in its management, including collection, treatment, disposal, and recycling of litter,

Underscoring the importance of implementing various 3R policies and programmes, including necessary infrastructure development, to achieve the *Sustainable 3R Goals of the Ha Noi 3R Declaration (2013-2023)* which provides a common and regional vision and framework for moving towards a resource efficient and zero waste society,

Noting the outcome of the Maldives 3R Forum (2015) that 3R as an economic industry offers competitive solutions to many urban environment and development issues, including issues of plastic waste, provided 3Rs and resource efficiency are integrated into macroeconomic and development policies,

Noting the objectives of the *Adelaide 3R Declaration towards the Promotion of Circular Economy in Achieving Resource Efficient Societies in Asia and the Pacific under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2016)* which calls among other things the need for strengthening coordination among countries and within countries to progressively adopt and implement circular economy plans, a whole-of-value chain approach, strategies and tools to reduce, reuse, and recycle natural resources in production, consumption and other life cycle stages, enabled by extended producer responsibility (EPR), environmentally friendly design, low emissions technology, ecological budgeting, financial incentives and investments, taking into account the prevailing economic conditions,

Recognizing the role of pristine coastal and marine environment as significant means and resources for sustainable tourism development, thereby safeguarding the economic security of Asia-Pacific countries, especially Small Island Developing States (SIDS),

Taking into account the fact that improper management of plastic wastes have considerable impacts on biodiversity, water and air quality, economy including tourism industry and society,

Noting the challenges of plastic waste pollution have become critical issues world-wide, especially where marine plastic litter in marine crosses continents in ocean currents, thereby the shared concern for all countries,

Underscoring that plastic waste pollution has become a critical concern in the urban and coastal marine environment of the Asia-Pacific region, including the small island developing states (SIDS), and that most plastics do not truly degrade but break down into numerous smaller particles and remain hundreds of years into the future causing a range of impacts in coastal and marine environment, including bio-accumulation of hydrophobic persistent organic pollutants (POPs) like PCBs, DDTs, HCHs and others from the plastics through ingestion or food-chain (fist to fish and fish to people),

Reaffirming the commitment of East Asia Summit (EAS) Leaders' Statement on Combating Marine Plastic Debris which include improving and promoting the environmentally sound management of plastic waste and resource efficiency through land - and sea - based activities, and welcome ASEAN+3 Marine Plastics Debris Cooperative Action Initiative to enhance cooperation on combating marine plastic debris, adopted by ASEAN related Summits held in November 2018,

Noting the outcome of the Special ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Marine Debris, held on 5 March 2019 in Bangkok, Thailand, which welcomed the ASEAN Framework of Action on Marine Debris. The Framework comprises four priority areas namely; 1) Policy Support and Planning 2) Research, Innovation and Capacity Building 3) Public Awareness, Education and Outreach, and 4) Private Sector Engagement,

Recognizing the importance of multiple benefits of 3R and circular economic development approach through savings of resource, environment, energy and cost-effectiveness towards prevention and reduction of plastic waste,

Reaffirming that the Regional 3R Forum in Asia and the Pacific has contributed to promote 3R and circular economy policies in Asia and the Pacific region.

Express our voluntary commitments to:

1. *Identify* gaps in the existing laws and institutions and regulations, and further reinforce the ongoing 3R and sustainable waste management actions and measures towards the issue of plastic waste, including single-use plastics;

2. *Develop* effective 3R policies, programmes, including infrastructure development in order to upscale the reusing and the recycling towards circular economic utilization of plastics, and to prevent leakage into the coastal and marine environment;

3. *Support* various innovative solutions for new and sustainable business models which would promote greening the supply chain and multi-use alternatives, including alternatives to single-use plastics products such as reusable, environmentally friendly biodegradable products, and eco-design of plastic products;

4. *Support* necessary research and development programmes on bio-based alternatives which would promote environment friendly bio-economy bringing in new sustainable business and employment opportunities while influencing consumer behavior towards green procurement;

5. *Strengthen* international agreements, policies, and cooperation towards efficient reduction and impacts of plastic waste pollution by reducing single-use plastics, promoting plastic waste recycle as resources, recyclable materials and waste-to-energy, among others;

6. *In conformity* with pertinent regulations and standards governing environmental quality, eco-systems, health and safety, protection of sensitive areas, costal and marine environment and endangered species, sitting, and land-use control, *promote and implement* environmentally friendly waste collection, segregation, transportation, recycling and final disposal;

7. *Promote* various public awareness programmes and campaigns in order to d*iscourage* the use of single-use plastics as a first priority; *build* an effective after-use plastic economy and *explore* ways to utilize end-of-life plastics as a valuable resource, which would help to make a transition towards circular economy;

8. *Promote* sharing of knowledge and best practices on the effective management of marine litter in the region and *support* the establishment of a regional knowledge hub for the purpose;

9. *Consider* mobilizing dedicated funds and investments for cost-effective plastic waste management technologies and plastics waste recycling facilities with an objective to protect the local environment and ecosystem, including coastal and marine environment which will in return attract international tourism resulting in increased government revenue generation and local employment opportunities;

10. *Promote* multilayer collaborations and partnerships such as the public-private-partnerships (PPP), as called upon by the Surabaya 3R Declaration (2014) and ASEAN+3 Marine Plastics Debris Cooperative Action Initiative, in order to implement various 3R programmes towards

the prevention and proper management of plastic waste, including the marine debris; to this regard, *strengthen* regional cooperation in addressing the issues of single-use plastic products, including their detrimental impact on coastal and marine ecosystem; and

11. *Recognize* the importance of monitoring marine litter, and thereby, explore, develop and *harmonize* methods on counting beach litter items (such counts are internationally accepted as a reasonable indicator of the composition of marine litter towards informed decision making).

12. *Attach* significance of 3R and circular economy, and to that regard, the important role the private, business and industry sectors can play in mainstreaming 3R in their business operations and solutions, as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), to many sustainability challenges faced by the Asia-Pacific countries.

Express our resolve to implement necessary 3R and circular economy policy and measures in Asia and the Pacific to prevent plastic waste pollution, including marine littering**.**