

Forum: UNEP



Question of: Evaluating Counter-Measures against Maritime Pollution through Waste with Special Regard to COVID-19-Pandemic Induced Waste

Submitted by: Canada

Co-submitted by: Australia, Chile, Finland, Israel

The United Nations Environmental Programme,

Recognizing that 80% of the pollution to the marine environment comes from land, therefore the problem ultimately needs to be solved there,

Noting with deep concern that plastic waste in the water can injure and choke bigger marine life and when dissolved into smaller particles can be eaten by sea-life that cannot digest the plastic and therefore starves with clogged intestines,

Further deploring that some water pollution starts as air pollution through e.g. carbon dioxide emission, which settles into waterways and oceans and causes ocean acidification, other parts through industrial pollutants including heavy metals and other toxic chemicals which can travel thousands of kilometers and linger in the water for years, building up in the bodies of wildlife,

Emphasizing that not every taken action is useful, especially when not internationally coordinated, some tactics can even cause further damage to the marine life,

Realizing that face masks are a potential source of micro plastic fibers in the environment, as personal protective equipment (PPE) is made from layers of petroleum based, non-biodegradable polymer fabric,

Fully alarmed by the observation that the human health is endangered through the pollution of maritime areas and its effects on human sources for food and water,

Recognizing that all sorts of maritime pollution are of great danger and should be prohibited,

Guided by the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, especially goal 14 for life below water and 17 for partnerships for the goals,

1. **Declares** clearly that the fight against the COVID-19 Pandemic is the first goal to tackle, while the fight against maritime pollution is secondary and dependent on the ending of the pandemic;
2. **Calls upon** communication and collaboration on all levels, international, but also nationwide between provinces, territories, municipalities, and indigenous governments to coordinate localized and harmonized waste management procedures, as well as investments in appropriate infrastructure and markets to help implement circular economy for plastics together as maritime pollution is a global problem that can only be solved with united international efforts, that should include notably, but not exclusively:
 - a. Financial support of developing and emerging countries,

- b. Working close with ASEAN and local governments of small islands that import most of the plastic waste of the Western countries;
3. **Welcomes** that all countries are dedicated to the already set ambitious timelines and to accelerate international actions;
4. **Recommends** increasing domestic capacity to manage plastics as a resource, prevent its leakage into the marine environment from all sources, and enable its collection through e.g. financing trash cans, reuse, recycling, recovery and/or environmentally-sound disposal;
5. **Proposes** to support research, innovation and new technologies to develop alternatives to plastic that will not harm the marine ecosystem, by:
 - a. A G7 sponsored Plastics Innovation Challenge, to promote research and development of new and more sustainable technologies, design or production methods to address plastic waste in the oceans with a focus on all stages of the production and supply chains,
 - b. Promoting the research, development and use of technologies to remove plastics and micro plastics from waste water and sewage sludge,
 - c. Guiding the development and appropriate use of new innovative plastic materials and alternatives to ensure they are not harmful to the environment,
 - d. Collaborating on research to determine their impact on human and marine health;
6. **Encourages** partnering with industry and after-use markets to work towards recycling and reusing 50% of plastic waste by 2030 and reducing waste that could end up in the waterways by 100% until 2050 through actions, such as:
 - a. Avoiding the use of single-use plastics,
 - b. Reducing the use of micro beads in cosmetic and personal care consumer products,
 - c. Supporting secondary markets for plastics by using policy measures and developing international standards or requirements for product stewardship and recycled content,
 - d. Increasing waste management efficiency and recycling activities;
7. **Suggests** to invest into clean-up programs that prove to be environmentally-sound and to support NGO's to recover plastics that are already launched into the ocean, especially in global hotspots and priority areas;
8. **Further suggests** to take measures and mobilizing actions to improve the understanding, mitigation or remediation of plastic waste and pollution by:
 - a. Providing resources, including the youth, to make informed choices about how to buy, use, dispose or recycle their plastic products,

- b. Supporting platforms for information sharing to foster awareness and education efforts on preventing and reducing plastic waste, plastic pollution and eliminating marine litter,
 - c. Promoting the leadership role of women and youth as promoters of sustainable consumption and production practices;
9. **Urges** a green strategy for COVID-19 health measures, regarding the known difficulties of predictions concerning the pandemic and also finding alternatives to sterile and disposable plastics in health equipment, by the implementation of:
- a. Financial programs for developing biodegradable, recyclable and reusable masks,
 - b. The use of social media and traditional marketing campaigns to raise public awareness about proper disinfection, reuse and disposal of COVID-19 induced wastes to ensure that no more excess waste than necessary is produced and does not end up as litter in the environment, specifically the water,
 - c. A quicker vaccination process to prevent the use of PPE but especially test kits for the next years to come;
10. **Strongly** affirms that the danger of industrial pollutants for maritime ecosystems should not to be overseen and prevented by:
- a. Supporting research for alternative biodegradable or recyclable ingredients to hazardous household wastes in products such as paints, solvents, disinfectants and corrosive chemicals in ovens and dry cleaners that find their way into landfills and storm sewers, leaching into ground water and then into lakes, rivers, and oceans,
 - b. Establishing guidelines for 0% of untreated sewage to flow into the oceans and financing cleansing systems, to change that everyday billions of liters of Municipal sewage, containing human waste, run-off and toxic pollutants flow into waters, 20% of those untreated,
 - c. Financing research for environmental-friendly agricultural fertilizer and manure instead of phosphates and nitrates that threaten marine life by washing off into streams and the ground water and therefore into the oceans where they speed up the aging of water bodies or spread bacteria, and seeing financial encouragement for people working in the agricultural sector to use these,
 - d. Establishing programs and new laws for standards of safety when dealing with oil in shipping, but also in smaller operations like refineries and cars to avoid oil spills that ravage marine environments,
 - i. Financing further research in possible alternative fuels for shipping like LNG, LPG, methanol, biofuel and hydrogen and new technologies like battery systems, fuel cells and wind-assisted propulsion,
 - ii. Finance further research in alternatives for oil used in cars,
 - iii. Including the establishment of mobile teams, that are specialized in dealing with oil that has already been spilled,

e. working with the UN atomic energy commission as radioactive contamination from nuclear waste that is discarded in the ocean may work its way up the marine food web, thus requesting safe spots for discarding nuclear waste;

f. Proposes a tax on the extraction of raw materials such as petroleum for the production of single-use plastics.

10. Suggests a new fund in which every country pays an amount of money into on a yearly basis that will go to industrial states as well as developing and emerging countries in order to tackle the issue of maritime pollution for:

a. Educational purposes on how to live more sustainable and preventing maritime pollution,

b. Start-up companies which are developing new methods for preventing pollution,

c. New methods to clean the oceans, even on a microscopic level;

11. Asks for establishing marine protected areas to protect its sea life and ensure its diversity;

12. Expresses its hope to take these actions united, with strong international partnerships, as the before mentioned points can only be achieved when every country joins the efforts.