

Forum: United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP GC)

Question of: Evaluating Counter Measures against Maritime Pollution

with Special Regard to COVID-19 Pandemic-Induced Waste

Submitted by: Costa Rica

Co-submitted by: Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines



The United Nations Environmental Programme,

Guided by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular Goal 14, to protect the life below water,

Realizing that the pandemic has generated changes in human consumption patterns such as the excessive use of single-use plastic and personal protective equipment (PPE), which has increased by 40%

Bearing in mind that some nations environmental standards have been lowered to accelerate their response to the pandemic,

Noting that the increased amount of Covid-19 waste in our waters is having negative effects on the maritime wildlife and ecosystem,

Realizing that our planet can no longer tolerate a culture of throw-away plastic,

Alarmed by the fact that the destruction of the marine ecosystem is a threat to all life and leads to a lasting damage of the entire planet,

Viewing with appreciation the willingness of the member states to tackle the negative impacts of marine pollution,

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. **Urges** that plastic has to be replaced by alternatives that are mostly recyclable or biodegradable and not petroleum-based;
3. **Encourages** the member states to increase funding for scientific research on reducing maritime waste, including topics such as:
 - a. Development of technologies for cleaning the oceans from waste with special regards to microplastic,
 - b. Methods to remove and prevent marine pollution due to incidents for example caused by oil platforms e.g.,
 - c. Recyclable and environmentally friendly alternatives for plastic and personal protective equipment against the Coronavirus,
 - d. Non-toxic respectively biodegradable chemicals,
 - e. Actionable methods or systems for energy generation from waste;

4. **Urges** to protect and help developing and emerging countries with discounted technology, money and knowledge;
5. **Emphasizes** the need to subsidize the extraction of petroleum as it is the most important economic resource in the world while actively looking for ecologically sustainable substitutes,
6. **Calls upon** all governments to minimize the use of environmentally harmful substances in the industry by establishing maximum values for chemical substances;
7. **Urges** the governments to work closely together with the industries and to conclude voluntary commitments to find better practices for the handling and storage of pollutants, which
 - a. Includes the identification of chemical pollution hotspots,
 - b. Requires compiling information for a pollution prevention to be able to introduce helpful systems,
 - c. Helps reducing industrial waste;
8. **Proposes** to increase the tax on products containing single used plastic particles;
9. **Encourages** scientists, international institutions and national governments to evaluate alternative spaces for storing trash which is already produced;
10. **Proposes** national governments to plan and conduct informational campaigns in order to reduce the waste landing in the oceans, as well as improving the dialogue on the topic of maritime pollution in all countries, by
 - a. Offering free workshops held by trained teachers and/or international specialists that can take place in schools e.g. on the topic of reusable products, how to dispose of plastic and how to avoid it, which:
 - b. Supporting platforms and apps for information sharing on preventing and reducing plastic waste;
11. **Urges** the establishment of more marine protected areas as well as stronger monitoring to ensure compliance with the restrictions;
12. **Calls for** a new, binding contract about deporting waste, which
 - a. Is to be adhered to by all countries,
 - b. Every country supports actively,
 - c. Deals with costs and management and non-recyclable trash;
13. **Requests** the founding of an UN-taskforce by the UNEP to monitor, support and report about international guidelines for the protection of the sea in order to
 - a. Publish and thus prevent illegal or strong polluting activities,
 - b. Increase the information availability of sustainable alternatives for plastic-based products and thereby,
 - c. Decrease the production of environmental harmful products,
 - d. Foreclose health risks for all species;

14. **Recommends** working together with non-profit/ civil society organizations (NGOs) helping the government to achieve the points mentioned above as well as
- a. Forming initiatives to address marine litter and plastic pollution and thereby helping to increase consumer awareness on these topics,
 - b. Organizing and undertaking coastal clean-ups (campaigns) to remove the abandoned marine litters from coastal ecosystems;
15. **Calls for** all member states to further financially support organizations that free the oceans from waste and protect the wildlife from the toxic impact of the pollution;
16. **Further recommends** to establish processes of sorting waste in every UN member state to
- a. Reduce the quantity of trash in the ocean,
 - b. Increase the quantity of recycled trash;
17. **Encourages** taking important measures such as
- a. Enabling consistent waste separation by providing enough trash cans;
18. **Supports** scientific opinions, strategies, actions and claims that can help to protect the maritime ecosystem and solve its problems;
19. **Decides** to remain actively seized on the matter.