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**United Nations Environment  
Assembly of the United Nations  
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**141st meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives  
to the United Nations Environment Programme**

Nairobi, 20 February 2018

10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Conference Room 1

Agenda 5

**Note by the Secretariat on implementation plan of the Assembly resolution on marine litter and  
microplastics**

The Secretariat is pleased to present a note in support of discussions under agenda item 5 “Implementation of the Programme of Work and Budget and the Assembly resolutions”. This note is intended to present implementation plan of the Assembly resolution UNEP/EA.3/Res.7 on marine litter and microplastics, for your consideration. The advance copy of resolution is now available through the following link:

<http://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/22773>

## Introduction

1. Litter is found in all the world's oceans and seas, even in remote areas far from human contact due to its transboundary nature. The continuous growth in the amount of solid waste thrown away and the slow rate of degradation of most items are together leading to a gradual increase in marine litter found at sea, on the sea floor and coastal shores. It has become an economic, environmental, human health and aesthetic problem posing a complex and multi-dimensional challenge. In the global context, marine litter has become a priority area. The United Nations Environment Assembly has recognized marine litter as one of the top priorities through its three resolutions (1/6 in 2014, 2/11 in 2016, and 3/7 in 2017) specifically calling for actions to combat marine litter. Marine litter has also been recognized in the Sustainable Development Goal 14, and its targets and indicators.

## Resolution implementation

2. The Marine litter and microplastics Resolution (UNEP/EA.3/Res.7) includes several asks to the UN Environment:
  - Operative Paragraph 7 asks for strengthening the UN Environment's capacity and activity on marine litter and microplastics, including through regional and national action plans, gaps and data;
    - An expansion of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter is ongoing through targeted outreach, regional representation in the Steering Committee. regional nodes from four to six nodes;
    - UN Environment is providing support to the development of six new regional action plans, the revision of one, and is in discussion with two additional regions to support assessments and action plans. A stocktaking exercise is ongoing to look at successes and challenges related to existing plans, to inform the development of plans for the other regions. The prioritization of action is key for the regions.
    - Harmonization of monitoring methodologies for marine litter (also for rivers) is ongoing and will contribute to the indicator work under Sustainable Development Goals and provide guidance to countries on how to set up monitoring programmes and where to fill data gaps;
    - Guidelines for hotspot assessment are being developed for 1) key intervention points in value chains; 2) Sources and accumulation zones
  - Operative Paragraph 9 requests the compilation of a report on relevant marine litter and plastics voluntary commitments
    - Coordination has been initiated with UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs that supports the Partnerships for Sustainable Development Goals online platform – UN's global registry of voluntary commitments and multi-stakeholder partnerships for the Sustainable Development Goals<sup>1</sup>. The platform facilitates access to registries of commitments/partnerships from various sustainable development conferences/processes, including the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, and the Ocean Conference (June 2017). The UN Environment Assembly Voluntary Commitments/Partnership Registry will also be utilized which was already established on the above platform to collect commitments/partnerships for the recent UN Environment Assembly available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnerships/unea>.
  - Operative Paragraph 11 requests the compilation of a "Report on the implementation of resolutions 1/6, 2/11 and 3/7"
    - UN Environment will compile global and regional action and is also proposing that there would be an online voluntary reporting mechanism for input from countries and other major groups and stakeholders.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnerships/>

- **Operative Paragraph 10:** Convene an Ad Hoc Open-Ended Expert Group to examine the barriers to and options for combating marine plastic litter and microplastics from all sources, especially land-based sources, with an initial Programme of Work, including
  1. explore all barriers to combating marine litter and microplastics, including challenges related to resources in developing countries,
  2. identify the range of national, regional and international response options, including actions and innovative approaches, and voluntary and legally binding governance strategies and approaches;
  3. identify environmental, social and economic costs and benefits of different response options;
  4. examine the feasibility and effectiveness of different response options;
  5. identify potential options for continued work for consideration by the United Nations Environment Assembly,

At least one meeting, but no more than two meetings should be convened, before the fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly.

**Planned Implementation of operative paragraph 10:**

- Submissions of names by Member States and Major Groups and Stakeholder with the name of a “Focal Point” by 20 March
- Four draft background documents/discussion papers (as per work plan above 1-4) by 10 May
- Potentially invite “position papers” from major groups and stakeholders (2-4 pages)
- First Meeting tentatively 29-31 May to review background documents in light of UNEP/EA.3/INF/5 and discuss what may be included in a draft options paper
- Draft options paper developed by September 2018;
- Second Meeting November 2018 to review and further develop options paper;
- Options paper by 15 January 2019;
- Report on Voluntary Commitments by 15 January 2019
- Report of implementation of the Assembly resolutions by 15 January 2019
- Six new regional action plans by January 2019
- Progress report for the fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly by 15 January 2019