

Background note on workshop on Information and Monitoring

Note from Secretariat

I. Background

1. At its first meeting in Nairobi 29-31 May 2018, the Ad Hoc open-ended Expert Group on marine litter and microplastics, requested the Secretariat to undertake the planning for a second meeting before the end of 2018, during which participants would further explore options for consideration at the fourth United Nations Environment Assembly in 2019.
2. Monitoring, data and research emerged as a key topic which could benefit from additional discussions by the Ad Hoc open-ended Expert Group on marine litter and microplastics, through a workshop format. In this regard this paper aims to facilitate discussions on Data and Monitoring of Marine Litter and Microplastics. Additionally, keeping in mind SDG target 14.1 (by 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, particularly from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution).
3. Participants are invited to explore options for information and monitoring set out in the consolidated report (UNEP/AHEG/2018/2/2)¹, taking into consideration different aspects of management of marine litter and microplastics, including risks, opportunities and synergies, and as far as possible, costs and benefits. The areas selected for further, focused discussion, were highlighted during the meeting and summarized by the Co-chairs, and include:
 - a. co-ordination across the United Nations;
 - b. innovation and technologies;
 - c. internationally agreed environmental goals, programmes, platforms and initiatives;
 - d. environmental baselines;
 - e. social and economic impacts; and
 - f. enabling conditions.

II. Information and monitoring: barriers and opportunities

4. Key barriers and potential opportunities in relation to information and monitoring for discussion by the break-out group include:

Barriers	
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No international legally binding agreement, inter-ministerial co-operation or harmonized, binding standards on marine litter pollution from marine plastic waste, including contamination regulations for foods and ecosystems, or measurable targets or timelines at the global level for the reduction of marine pollution, particularly from land-based sources• Limited number and information on legal instruments or incentives to reduce unnecessary, difficult to recycle plastics or shedding of microplastics during use, such as due diligence, “polluter pays” principle, Extended Producer Responsibility schemes, or any form of global liability and compensation mechanism

¹ United Nations Environment (2018) Consolidated Background Paper of the Discussion Papers presented at the Ad Hoc open-ended Expert Group on marine litter and microplastics First meeting, Nairobi, 29–31 May 2018.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of single national authority or body responsible for overseeing the collection of information and monitoring, particularly on the high seas • Lack of overarching national strategies that provide stability for industry investment, and to stimulate flow of funds from national to local levels • Lack of policy drivers to stimulate end-markets such as supply and demand for recycled material
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of information on extent and impacts of fossil fuel and other perverse forms of subsidies that de-incentivise solutions • Lack of funds to undertake research, gather information and monitor environmental, social and economic baselines, social and economic impacts, policy drivers, economic incentives, production, consumption, trade, and end-of-life treatment monitor impacts of market-based instruments and tax incentives to stimulate investment in local infrastructure for collection, treatment or disposal and environmentally and financially sustainable end-of-life treatment of plastic waste
Technological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of inclusion of overarching principles - SCP, Circular Economy, EPR, protection of human health and biodiversity • Insufficient information on use of recycled materials in products and innovative technological infrastructure, especially in rural areas, for waste management and recycling, dealing with alternative materials, retention of microplastics in waste water treatment and sludge and monitoring and diagnostic technologies to enable national bodies to evaluate compliance with environmental standards • Absence of data to support a coordinated development and adoption of labelling standards for reuse and recyclability of products
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of harmonized, monitoring methodologies and data on the sources, flows and extent of plastics and microplastics in the marine environment, their impacts on human health, food chains and ecosystems and associated risks and costs • Lack of global and national reporting standards on the production, consumption, use, end-of-life/final treatment and trade of plastic that will eventually become waste, including if traded waste is mismanaged, by going to landfill rather than licensed facilities (see options 2 and 3 in UNEP/AHEG/2018/2/INF/3)
Opportunities	
Option 1	Status quo – e.g. monitoring, data and research tackled through existing multilateral agreements including Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm and Regional Seas raising the issue of marine plastics and litter in a broader context
Option 2	Voluntary approach – e.g. opportunities to develop new monitoring and information inputs using novel technologies according to local capacities and needs
Option 3	Legally binding agreement – e.g. opportunities for consistent long-term monitoring, information and research activities

III. Rules of engagement

5. To enable all experts to be heard and participate effectively, experts will be invited to join a break-out group. Each area listed above will be discussed in a separate break-out group. The discussions will be led by two Co-facilitators, one from amongst the governments and one from amongst the participants of the major groups and stakeholders, reflecting gender, geography and interests; support to each break-out group will be provided by senior experts and a note-taker from the Secretariat. Co-facilitators will be designated by the Co-Chairs of the Ad hoc open ended experts group.
6. Participants are asked to refer to the background assessments and consolidated paper (UNEP/AHEG/2018/2/2),² especially on areas where more analysis is required, and ways of overcoming the major barriers to combating marine litter and microplastics.
7. Proceedings will be undertaken in English, with interpretation available in one break-out group only. The format of the meeting will be informal, with all experts invited to speak during the discussions.

IV. Points to consider and expected outcomes

8. The break-out groups will address four questions in relation to their theme and the barriers listed above as well as others that the group might wish to highlight during the course of their discussions:
 - (a) What are the main priorities in information and monitoring?
 - (b) How can existing legal instruments support these priorities?
 - (c) What are the implications of Options 1,2 and 3 for information and monitoring?
 - (d) What are the next steps to be taken to address barriers and opportunities?
9. In addressing these questions, the break-out group may wish to consider the following (note that examples of each element, which may be useful for stimulating the discussion, are included in an Annex):
 - (i) What could be suggested elements of a voluntary or binding architecture for monitoring?
How could this link with SDG monitoring?
 - (ii) How should national information include both information related to the sources and final location of pollutants?

² To facilitate discussions at its second meeting, at its first meeting in Nairobi (29-31 May 2018), the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics, requested the secretariat to consolidate the four background discussion papers, drawing on the four information documents, i.e. UNEP/AHEG/2018/1/2 on “Barriers to combating marine litter and microplastics, including challenges related to resources in developing countries”; UNEP/AHEG/2018/1/3 on “National, regional and international response options, including actions and innovative approaches, and voluntary and legally binding governance strategies and approaches”; UNEP/AHEG/2018/1/4 on “Environmental, social and economic costs and benefits of different response options”; and UNEP/AHEG/2018/1/5 on “Feasibility and effectiveness of different response options”. The four documents and the consolidated one are available at: <https://papersmart.unon.org/resolution/adhoc-oeeg> and <https://papersmart.unon.org/resolution/second-adhoc-oeeg>.

- (iii) What role could regional or global data collection and modelling play in better understanding marine litter and microplastic flow and state? How can regional and global partnerships and institutions support data collection and modelling?
- (iv) What role can citizens or citizen science play in information and monitoring?
- (v) How will the areas beyond national jurisdiction³ be monitored and assessed?

10. The main outcome of the breakout group discussions will be a set of recommendations on information and monitoring, proposals on ways to overcome the different barriers, ways of improving synergies with existing legal instruments and the pros and cons of different international response Options, as well as national and regional responses, discussed in the first meeting of the Ad Hoc open-ended Expert Group in June 2018 and presented in the consolidated report. These will be presented and discussed in Plenary.

11. The recommendations for each topic will be integrated into an outcome document to be presented at the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly.

³ [Areas beyond national jurisdiction \(1\) "Area" means the seabed and ocean floor and subsoil thereof, beyond the limits of national jurisdiction;](#)