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**United Nations  
Environment Assembly of the  
United Nations Environment  
Programme**

**Ad hoc open-ended expert group  
on marine litter and microplastics  
fourth meeting**

Item 4 (a) of the draft provisional agenda\*  
**Stocktaking of existing activities and action  
(subparagraph 7a)**

**Draft Provisional summary of the stocktake of existing activities  
and action towards the long-term elimination of discharges into  
the oceans, to reduce marine plastic litter and microplastics**

**Note by the Secretariat**

1. The ad hoc open-ended expert group (AHEG) was established through the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) resolution 3/7 paragraph 10. Its mandate was extended through UNEA resolution 4/6 paragraph 7, which also requested the group to, amongst other things, through subparagraph 7(a):

*“Take stock of existing activities and action by governments, regional and global instruments, international organizations, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and other relevant contributors to reduce marine plastic litter and microplastics with the aim of the long-term elimination of discharge into the oceans”*

2. The expert group requested the Secretariat, in the outcome document from the third ad hoc open-ended on marine litter and microplastics\*, to consider relevant work undertaken by UNEP, as well as other relevant existing bodies of work, such as information submitted as part of studies undertaken by, for example, the Group of 20, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Regional Seas Programmes and the Basel Convention; invite voluntary contributions to the stocktaking exercise through the survey tool or through other submissions, such contributions need not be exhaustive and may address any activity considered relevant by

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\* UNEP/AHEG/2020/4/1

\* Available at [https://papersmart.unon.org/resolution/uploads/aheg\\_3\\_outcome\\_document\\_0.pdf](https://papersmart.unon.org/resolution/uploads/aheg_3_outcome_document_0.pdf)

respondents; capture a wide range of activities, bearing in mind that the exercise will not be exhaustive; and provide guidance for the submission process and provide support as needed.

3. This document aims to provide a Draft Provisional summary of the stocktake of existing activities and action towards the long term elimination of discharges into the oceans, to reduce marine plastic litter and microplastics and is presented to the fourth meeting of the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics (AHEG-4) for discussion and consideration. The ultimate objective of the stocktaking exercise is to establish the extent of activities and their potential impact in the long-term on the elimination of discharges into the oceans and reduction of marine plastic litter and microplastics. The stocktaking exercise will be aligned with a revised methodology to analyse the effectiveness of existing and potential response options and activities on marine litter and microplastics at all levels to determine the contribution in solving the global problem mandated under UNEA resolution 4/6 subparagraph 7(d) and described in document UNEP/AHEG/2020/4/4. The results of the stocktaking will aim to ascertain the present focus of current and desired response options and activities and identify gaps in these across the four major areas to inform the design of future initiatives.

## **Introduction**

4. The stocktaking exercise has been prepared with the aim of gathering information on ongoing and planned activities by stakeholder groups that deal with marine litter and microplastics directly and indirectly. It is expected that the provisional report will inform the discussions at the fourth meeting of the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics in Lima 4-8 May 2020 and will assist in building the long-term capacity that would allow for a more strategic engagement in the overall process, including identification of areas with the greatest transformative potential.

## **Method**

5. This document aims to report on the existing actions and activities starting from 1 January 2018, with the stocktaking exercise and analysis running through the period of December 2019 to October 2020. A stocktake affords an opportunity to provide a snapshot of the current situation and ongoing work. It will enable member states and major groups to understand characteristics of current activities and actions and analyse partnerships and challenges. It will be used to identify best practice case studies.

6. To achieve a stocktake (of relevant existing activities and actions) governments, agencies related to regional and global instruments, international organizations, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and other relevant actors were invited to submit information on their existing actions and activities. The following section describes the method of data capture.

## ***Data Capture***

7. Actions and activities were captured for the stocktake via three routes. Figure 1 shows the data sources and where the data will be made available.

8. Information could be entered via a dedicated, tailor-made online survey entitled 'A Stocktake: Reducing Marine Plastic Litter and Microplastics'. This survey was open to submissions in its first phase between 18 December 2019 and 12 February 2020. The survey remains open to receive more submissions in its second phase; submissions made after the 12 February 2020 will be included in the next report to the AHEG 5.

9. Information could also be submitted by completing a Template [‘Template for country updating (information sharing) for the implementation Framework for Actions on Marine Plastic Litter’] via the UNEA papersmart portal<sup>†</sup>.

10. Recognising that member states have already submitted information on actions taken towards long term elimination of discharges into the oceans, desk research on prior work is ongoing to capture these actions from reports and websites of groups such as the Basel Convention, the Stockholm Convention, ASEAN, Regional Seas Programmes, as well as previous submissions to AHEG 1 and 2.

11. Insights and data from the stocktake will be accessible from three sources:

a. This Draft Working Document is a provisional summary of Phase 1 of the stocktaking of existing activities and actions.

b. The Information Document (UNEP/AHEG/2020/4/INF/5) will report on the complete data for Phase 1 and include an overview of the G20 submissions and prior work.

c. A UNEP online searchable platform will display the existing actions and activities by various parameters (e.g., by geographical location, type of action, sector etc.).

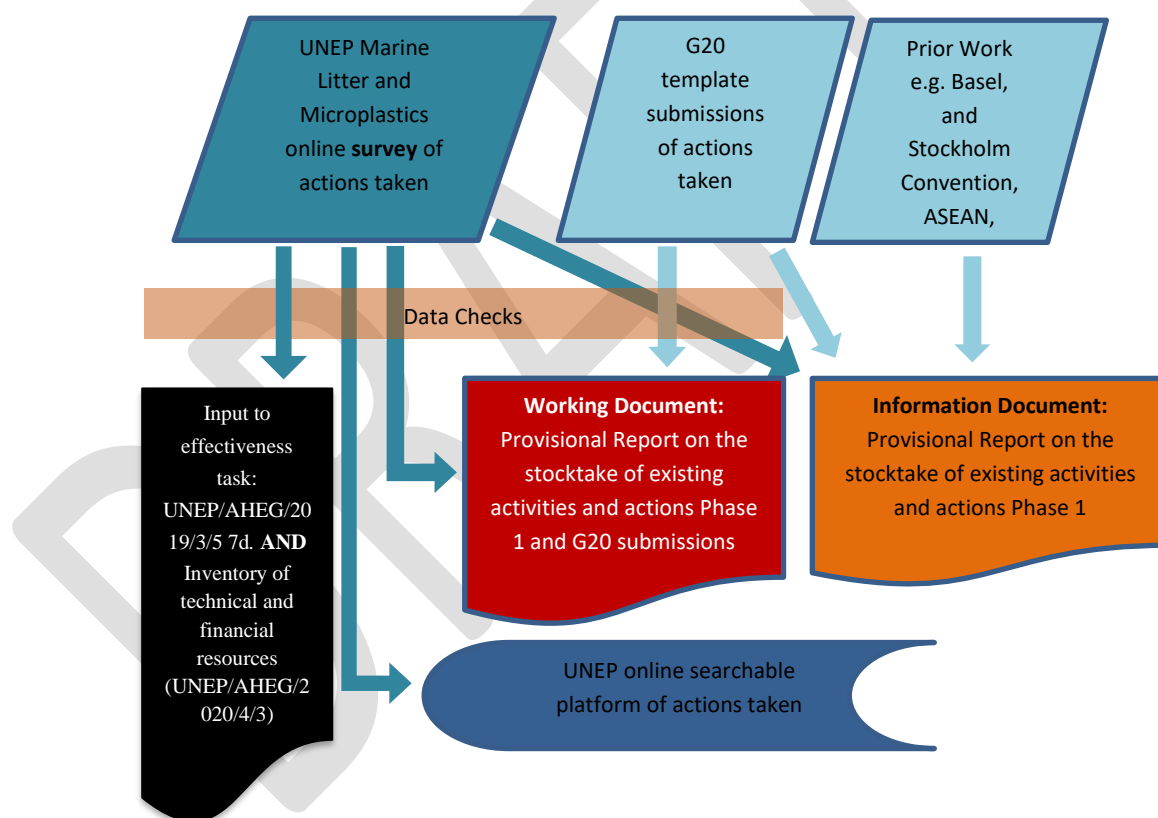


Figure 1: Overview of Stocktake efforts and data flow showing the three routes of data capture and their relationship to the two reporting documents and online searchable platform.

<sup>†</sup> <https://papersmart.unon.org/resolution/reporting-tool>

## ***The Online Survey, dissemination and invitations***

12. Following the third meeting of the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics, 18 - 22 November 2019, an invitation to member states and major groups was sent, on 18 December 2019, from the Chair of the ad hoc open-ended expert group, inviting inputs from member states and stakeholders to the working documents for the fourth meeting including voluntary inputs to the report on stocktaking through the web portal: <https://papersmart.unon.org/resolution/reporting-tool>. The survey was open and live to responses on 18 December 2019. In conjunction, invitations were also disseminated via social media between 17 and 19 January.

13. A Guidance Document was provided via the papersmart portal and was linked to the survey. This explained what the survey is about, why organisations should complete the stocktake survey, who the right person is to complete the survey, what to prepare, definitions of actions/activities to reduce marine litter and microplastics, who is requesting help, the survey format, who to contact and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's).

14. On 20 January, a well-attended Webinar was held to explain the survey aims and procedure. This webinar was recorded and made available online via the papersmart page. Questions asked by participants further informed the FAQ section in the guidance document.

15. A dedicated email address for queries was also communicated through the webinar, guidance document and papersmart portal ([marinelitterstocktake@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:marinelitterstocktake@plymouth.ac.uk)). Further invitation reminders were sent throughout January and February 2020.

## ***Data received, Quality Assurance and Data Storage***

16. As of 14 February 2020, 161 submissions had been received, of which 158 were usable. Survey data (csv file, SPSS and Excel) are stored on University of Plymouth servers and laptops (UoP are the data processors, UNEP are the data controllers), password protected and backed up regularly. There are two sets of data: a) personal contact data and b) data on the actions and activities. Participants confirmed during the survey that the latter data on actions can be made publicly available. The latter data are shared for the searchable online platform (see Fig. 1).

## **Provisional Results**

### ***Overview of Actions Submitted Via the Online Survey***

17. A provisional overview of data from the survey is presented here. Further data will be presented with a more detailed analysis in UNEP/AHEG/2020/4/INF/5 and updated for the fifth meeting of the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics.

### ***Overview of Survey Actions***

18. Survey respondents informed us of 158 existing activities and actions towards long-term elimination of discharges into the oceans (i.e. Number of Actions). Number of actions were submitted by different types of organisations: UN entities (31 actions), Regional Seas (15 actions), Major Groups (67 actions) and Governments (45 actions). Seventy-three actions were continuous with a longer than 3-year duration, 42 were between 1 to 3 years duration, 9 were less than one year and 21 were a single event (with 13 other or not applicable responses).

19. The summary of submitters to the survey is as follows: Intergovernmental submitters included UNEP, GESAMP, Secretariat of Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Convention, UN Habitat, UNDP, UNESCAP, UNICEF, UNIDO, IOC UNESCO, and IUCN. The Regional Seas submissions came from two submitters (COBSEA, HELCOM). Government submissions to date have come from Colombia, Cambodia, Ecuador, Finland, Germany, India, Japan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, Morocco, US. The Major Groups submissions came from a varied group

including universities, charities, trusts and foundations. Twenty-two submissions were made by individuals. Please note entities could submit more than one action (e.g. Japan submitted six actions). Note that this is the summary for Phase 1 and the survey remains open for further submissions.

20. The geographical focus of actions and activities was reported as follows: 26 global actions, 17 regional actions, 23 transnational actions (which includes bilateral actions), 53 national actions (covering one entire country) and 29 subnational actions (covering part of one country). There were 10 ‘other’ category actions, which were described as: subnational actions, as actions affecting only schools or smaller areas, individual cities or communities, or a particular sea (see Fig 1).



Figure 2: Pinpoints indicate locations by country for which at least ONE existing action was reported. Blue pins indicate UN locations of actions. The maps on this website are intended to visualize geographically the locations reported in the stocktaking survey. The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

### *Categories of Actions (Definitions)*

21. The online survey asked respondents to report actions using one of four main categories (highlighted below in bold) and also indicate which further subcategories applied:

22. **Legislation, Standards, Rules:** Official agreements, policy change or development, high-level strategy, legislation or regulations, voluntary commitments, new standard(s) or guideline(s), change in taxes/subsidies, subsidy/financial incentives, ban(s), package of measures combining incentives and infrastructure (e.g. deposit reward schemes).

23. **Working with People:** Awareness raising and behaviour change (information campaign/programme(s), community engagement, stakeholder engagement, citizen science, creative/arts events), education and training (curriculum development, professional training, lifelong learning, institutional development), workshops, conferences.

24. **Technology and Processes:** New product design, change in service provision, environmental social planning, change in practice, change in operations, industrial or production standard, different environmental management of land based environments, different environmental management of aquatic environments, research and development (reducing the environmental impact, developing a new material, developing a new process, manufacturing and production, standards, waste management, compostable plastic, bio-based plastic, bio-degradable plastic), new infrastructure, the use of compostable plastic, the use of bio-based plastic, the use of biodegradable plastic.

25. **Monitoring and Analysis:** Monitoring on or near the ocean surface/water column/seafloor/shoreline, biota/air, review and synthesis (environmental, economic, materials).

26. Note for the purpose of the survey, the UNEP/AHEG/2019/3/2 terminology was amended slightly to make it more accessible to respondents, following feedback and discussion at the AHEG meeting in Bangkok. The normative category of action were labelled ‘legislation, standards, rules’; capacity building was labelled ‘working with people’, and evidential was labelled monitoring and assessment. Further, ‘technology and processes’ was included as a category of action to facilitate the synergies and coordination with the preparation of the report “Provisional report of the Inventory of technical and financial resources and mechanisms for supporting countries in addressing marine plastic litter and microplastics” (UNEP/AHEG/2020/4/3)

27. Out of 158 actions reported, the most frequent category of action existing since 1 January 2018 was ‘working with people’ (60 or 38% of all actions), then ‘legislation, standards, rules’ (48 or 30.4% of all actions), then ‘monitoring and analysis’ (28 or 17.7% of all actions) and finally ‘technology and process’ (22 or 13.9% of all actions), see Table 1.

### *Category of Action by Geographic Focus, Environmental Zone, Lifecycle Phase, Reporting and Evaluation*

28. In line with document UNEP/AHEG/2019/3/2, the major categories of actions (legislation, standards, rule; working with people; technology and processes and monitoring and analysis) are presented below by four crosscutting themes (Geographic Focus, Environmental Zone, Lifecycle Phase, Reporting and Evaluation). Respondents submitted data on a) the geographic focus of the action (see also Fig 1/Table 1 for detail), b) which place in the environmental zone or source-to-sea their action targeted, c) which specific part of the lifecycle/plastic supply chain was targeted by the action, d) whether they report on the action and/or evaluate outcomes. Table 1 contains a summary of that data by the category of action described above.

29. Actions with a national or subnational geographic focus were the most frequent category of action taken (see also Table 1). For actions targeting different elements of the environmental zone, the ‘legislation, standards, rules’ and ‘working with people’ actions tended to focus more frequently on the urban environment and coastal zone. ‘Monitoring and analysis’ actions focused most frequently on the coastal zone. Technology and processes actions focused frequently on the urban environment and waste disposal sites.

30. Lifecycle phase: Actions reported in all categories tended to focus on use / consumption and after use (sorting and management of plastics collected). Fewer actions focused on the design, production, manufacture and raw material phase.

31. Reporting and evaluation: Actions were reasonably well reported across the categories with 58% of actions on ‘legislation, standards, rules’, 85% of actions in the ‘working with people’ category, 73% of actions in the ‘technology and processes’ category, and 64% of actions in the monitoring and analysis action reported on.

32. Actions in the ‘working with people’ category frequently related to a reduce, reuse, recycle approach, as did ‘legislation, standards, rules’ (Figure 2)

	Legislation, standards, rules	Working with People	Technology & Processes	Monitoring & Analysis
Total Actions per Main Category (n = 158; respondents were asked to select one main category)	48	60	22	28
Geographic Focus (respondents were asked to select only one)				
Global	7	6	7	6
Regional	6	7	2	2
Transnational	5	6	4	8
National	20	16	9	8

Sub-national	10	16	0	3
Other	0	9	0	1
Environmental Zone or 'Source to Sea' (respondents were asked to select all that apply)				
Mountains and Upland Area	6	7	2	2
Agricultural land/soil	6	6	3	2
Entire Water Catchment	11	11	4	3
Forests or Mangroves	6	14	2	2
Freshwater rivers and lakes	8	20	3	7
Urban Environment	19	31	9	7
Waste Disposal Sites	12	18	10	6
Coastal Zone	15	35	5	17
Maritime Area within Nat. Jurisdiction	13	23	0	8
Areas beyond Nat Jurisdiction	4	7	0	3
Open Ocean and High Seas	4	11	1	3
Air	1	2	0	0
All of the above	6	3	3	3
Not applicable	8	4	1	0
Other	7 <sup>‡</sup>	6 <sup>§</sup>	6 <sup>**</sup>	9 <sup>††</sup>
Lifecycle Phase (respondents were asked to select all that apply)				
Raw materials	3	6	2	2
Design	9	7	6	1
Production/Manufacture	14	9	3	3
Use/Consumption	26	30	6	5
Collection/Sorting of plastics after use	24	33	14	6
Management of collected plastics	21	32	13	4
Clean-up of plastic from the environment	14	38	5	12
All of the above	10	10	4	6
Not Applicable	2	3	0	9
Other Lifecycle phase <sup>‡‡</sup>	3	4	1	0
Reporting and Evaluation				
Yes, we report on the action	28	51	16	18
No, we do not report on the action	11	3	1	0
Reporting not applicable	9	6	5	10
Yes, outcomes are evaluated	26	41	14	17
No, outcomes are not evaluated	12	14	4	10

<sup>‡</sup> The Baltic Sea, Nova Scotia, Plastic value chain rather than places or areas.

<sup>§</sup> Source waste reduction and prevention, waste from school compounds, sporting facilities

<sup>\*\*</sup> The Baltic Sea, National marine environment, working with communities not zones

<sup>††</sup> Beaches, Coastal and Marine Areas within state jurisdiction, urban stormwater, freshwater litter, waste prevention, rural communities

<sup>‡‡</sup> Litter capture in the water catchment, preventing plastic entering stormwater, riverine environments, sources, pathways and hazards, and other aspects tailored to the situation.

Not App/Other comments on evaluation	10	5	4	1
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Table 1: Summary of situational analysis of the four major categories of activities and actions by four crosscutting themes (geographic focus, environmental zone, life cycle phase, and reporting and evaluation).

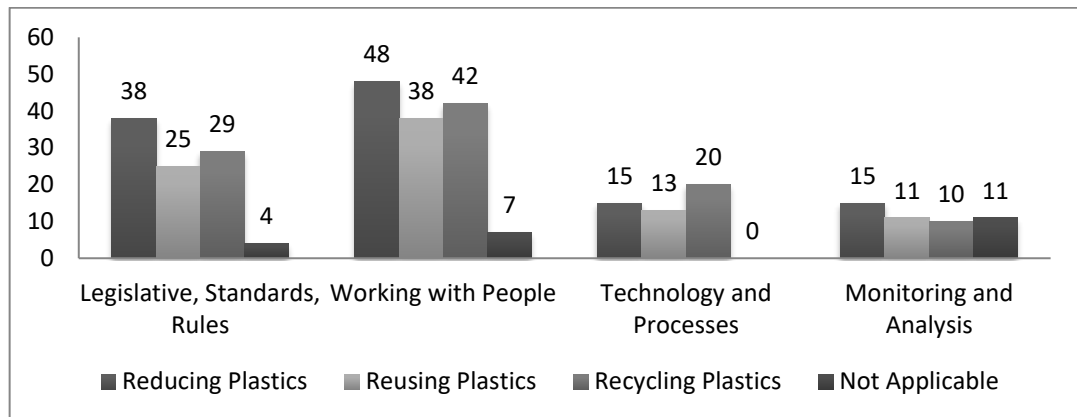


Figure 3: Number of actions targeting Reduce, Reuse and Recycle (by category of action) Respondents were asked to choose all that applied.

### Pollutants and Impacts

33. Respondents told us which pollutants were targeted in their actions (Figure 3). There was a stronger focus on targeting macroplastics across all categories of actions. Figure 4 shows the types of impacts evaluated by type of action, with social, environmental and economic impacts fairly evenly covered.

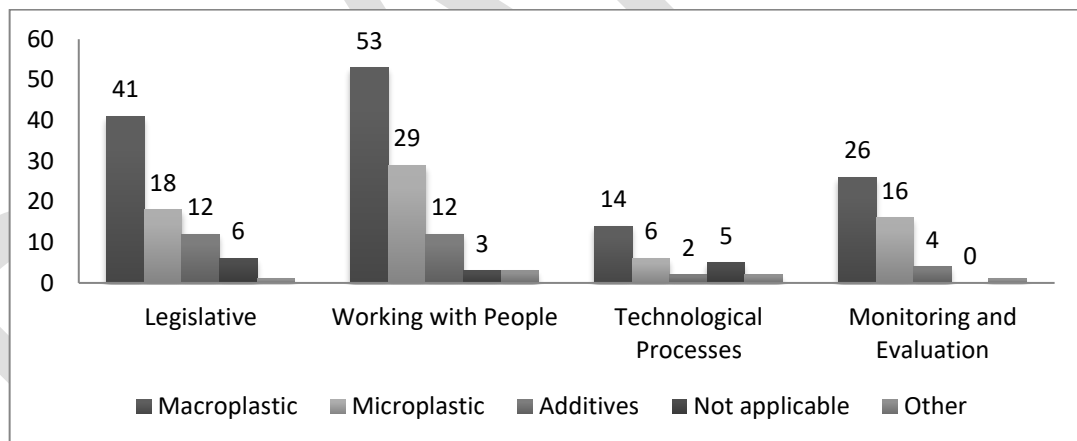


Figure 4: Type of Pollutant targeted by Actions/Activity, by category of action. ('Other' category included actions targeting Abandoned, Lost or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG), End of Life Boats (ELB), Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) and Extruded Polystyrene (XPS) and all waste, rather than plastic only). Respondents were asked to choose all that applied.

### Funding Sources and Partnerships

34. Public finance played an important role in financing the actions taken, with private sector finance and voluntary donations also contributing (Table 2). In terms of working with partners, 55 of the 'working with people' category of actions were alongside partners, 32 of the 'legislation, rules' category, 19 in 'technology and processes' and 24 in 'monitoring and assessment'. A minor number of actions reported having no partners and 16 reporting partner involvement as not applicable.



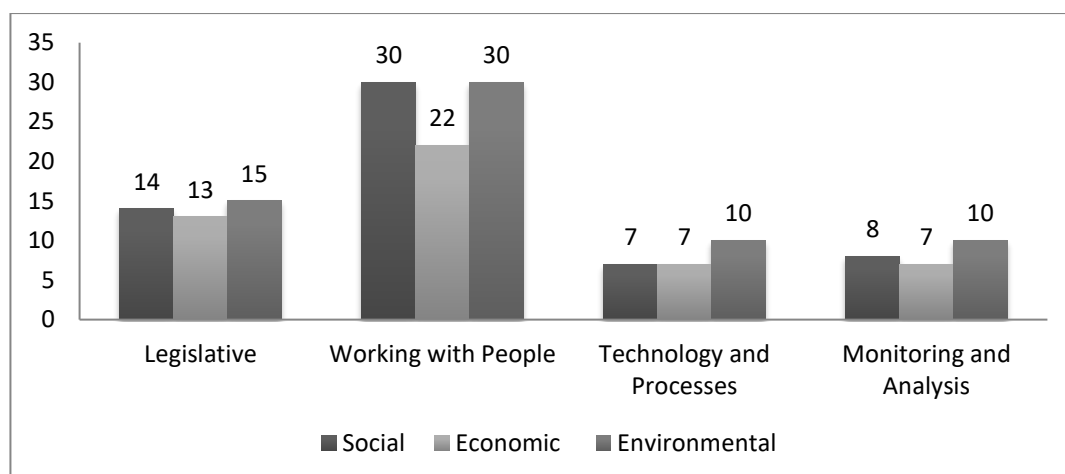


Figure 5: Types of impacts that are evaluated. Respondents were asked to choose all that applied.

	Legislative, Rules Standards	Working with People	Technology and Processes	Monitoring and Analysis
Crowdfunding	1	3	0	0
Voluntary donations	7	20	2	4
Public Financing	22	28	11	10
Private Sector	5	19	4	5
Mixed	7	8	5	1
All of the Above	0	1	1	1
Not Applicable	10	4	3	6
Other	1	14	2	5

Table 2: Funding types by category of actions (Respondents were asked to choose all that applied).

## Overview of Prior Work Undertaken By Member States and G20

35. Prior to the stocktake exercise and in line with the G20 Action Plan on Marine Litter, the recent G20 Report on Actions against Marine Plastic Litter (2019) reported on the status of G20 country actions and activities to address marine plastic litter. This report summarised that all countries had strategy and policy relevant to marine plastic litter, with 7 countries (out of 20) taking action on land, 10 countries addressing single use plastics, 8 countries regulating the use of microbeads, 13 countries improving waste management systems and recycling systems, 12 countries reported clean up activity at river and coast, and 8 countries targeting actions on fishing gear. Only a few countries had reported actions on R&D investment and financial incentives. §§

36. In addition to the phase 1 submissions for the stocktaking survey, by February 2020, a further 29 submissions based on the G20 template were received for the stocktake from countries and agencies (from, for example, Argentina, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Eritrea, Ethiopia, France, Guyana, Islamic Republic of Iran, Korea Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Romania, Singapore, Sudan, Switzerland, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom, USA). Submissions were predominantly from government ministries, but also from NGO's and organisations such as PEMSEA, MoreSe, OceanCare. For a list of submissions <https://papersmart.unon.org/resolution/stocktaking-submissions>.

§§ [https://g20mpl.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/G20-Report-on-Actions-against-Marine-Plastic-Litter\\_First-Information-Sharing-based-on-the-G20-Implementation-Framework.pdf](https://g20mpl.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/G20-Report-on-Actions-against-Marine-Plastic-Litter_First-Information-Sharing-based-on-the-G20-Implementation-Framework.pdf)

37. Provisional analysis of these recent G20 template submissions shows that entities continue to update and develop their legislation, policies, standards, rules and strategies on marine plastic litter. Approximately a quarter of submissions reported introducing bans on single use plastics (bags and straws, for example) and microplastics (microbeads in cosmetics, for example). Fiscal incentives or disincentives were reported in approximately a quarter of the submissions. ‘Working with people’ actions, particularly awareness raising campaigns, including citizen science projects, were reported widely. ‘Technology and process’ actions which targeted research and improving the knowledge base were also reported in these G20 template updates. In terms of the environmental zone and the lifecycle phase, whilst clean up at the shorelines and beach cleans continue, a feature of the updates were the increased reporting of actions taken on land (including waste management and recycling) and at rivers to reduce the discharge of marine plastic litter towards the ocean.

38. Recognising that there are further existing actions and activities since 1st Jan 2018 which have been reported to other agencies, desk research is underway to summarise this prior work in the final report of the stocktake. This will include actions and activities undertaken through the Basel Convention, The Partnership on Plastic Waste, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML) and Clean Seas Campaign, Regional Seas Convention(s)/Programmes, Stockholm Convention, Rotterdam Convention, and ASEAN.

39. Further detailed analysis of these actions and activities will be provided in the revised version of this Draft as well as in UNEP/AHEG/2020/4/INF/5 (and for the fifth meeting of the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics).

## Summary

40. This working document provides provisional results of Phase 1 of the stocktaking exercise of existing actions and activities towards long-term elimination of discharges into the oceans, to reduce marine plastic litter and microplastics. UNEP/AHEG/2019/3/2 set out the output of the stocktaking exercise as a report on the situational analysis of the major categories of actions and activities, across four crosscutting themes (life cycle phase, environmental zone, geographic range and reporting/compliance).

41. One-hundred and fifty-eight submissions of actions were submitted by a range of entities. Provisional analysis suggests that actions which involve working with people and the area of legislation/rules/standards dominated the existing action categories, and that national and subnational actions, actions that focused on urban and coastal environments and on use and after-use were reported more frequently.

42. The focus of actions was on macroplastics and more than half the actions report evaluation efforts. Impact evaluation (social, economic, environmental) is also more frequently happening as part of actions that involve working with people. Actions in the area of legislation, standards, rules and which involve working with people are more likely to also adopt a reduce, reuse and recycle approach. Funding mostly came from public sources, with the private sector and voluntary contributions also frequent sources of funding.

43. Further, G20 template submissions to the stocktake were received from entities which provide an update on actions and activities across member states.