

An underwater photograph showing a large, dark, crumpled piece of plastic debris floating in the water. The water is a deep blue-green color, and the debris is the central focus of the image. The lighting is somewhat dim, creating a somber and concerning atmosphere.

POTENTIAL RESPONSE OPTIONS TO COMBAT MARINE PLASTIC LITTER AND MICROPLASTICS FROM ALL SOURCES

Submission by The Philippines Pursuant to UNEA Resolution 3/7, Sub-Paragraph 10(d)

Marine Litter and Microplastics: A Global Transboundary Problem

- not a mere waste management problem in the Philippines or in Asia-Pacific alone.
- marine litter and microplastics know no national boundaries and jurisdictions as oceans are shared.
- the entire value chain of plastic is global.
- there is an international trade in source materials, in manufactured products and even in waste materials, both legal and illegal
- business decision-making of multi-national corporations in developing countries are made or at least heavily influenced by head offices in developed countries.

Recommended Global Response:

- a comprehensive approach at the national, regional and especially at the global levels as extensively discussed in past AHEG meetings - not one country alone can do it.
- many voluntary initiatives have been implemented across the globe and across regions since the adoption of the SDGs, including Goal 14 and the UNEA-1 Resolution on marine litter – that have fallen short of bringing us closer to the global goal of eliminating marine litter and microplastics.
- a strong global framework that takes into account the full life cycle approach of products and the shift towards a circular economy are urgently needed to solve the global problem of marine plastic pollution.
- the Philippines reiterates the importance of continuing discussion to “consider the feasibility and effectiveness of a potential international legally binding agreement on marine litter and microplastics” (UNEP/AHEG/2018/2/5) and for the start of the discussion of its elements to combat marine plastic pollution, together with the increasing number of countries and regional blocs.

Some Key Considerations in a Global Agreement to Address Marine Litter and Microplastics



Guiding Principles

- precautionary principle approach
- prevention principle - measures should prioritize addressing the prevention of marine litter at source
- polluter pays principle - cost of pollution prevention, control, and reduction measures are to be borne by the polluter with due regard to the public interest
- participatory approach - general public (local communities, CSOs, and local authorities) and private sector will be involved in the development and implementation of efforts
- ecosystem-based approach-cumulative effects of marine litter coming from both land- and sea-based sources on the marine and coastal ecosystem, habitats, and species with other contaminants and substances that are present in the marine environment should be fully considered in management of marine litter
- common but differentiated responsibilities

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Shared Vision

The global agreement should state the same agreed vision, consistent with the agreement in UNEA 3 Resolution 37 on the long-term elimination of discharge of litter and microplastics to the oceans and of avoiding detriment to marine ecosystems and to human activities dependent on them.

Reduction Targets

The international community should agree on a time-bound measurable target to reduce marine plastic pollution, using a standardized baseline and calculation method. All countries should then contribute to this reduction target, as they may determine nationally based on their national circumstances and contexts and come up with national action plans to achieve such target.

Common Global Standards

Common standards, rules and regulations should be considered for an integrated and coordinated response that include regulations on sustainable source materials including setting minimum percentage of recycled plastic content in feedstocks, certain types of plastics such as unnecessary single-use plastics and microbeads, common labelling, including customized EPR that would be applicable to all countries.

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Standard Monitoring & Reporting

The international community should harmonize and agree on standard monitoring and reporting mechanisms for comparability, interoperability and a way to effectively measure global progress in addressing marine plastic pollution throughout the full life cycle of products towards the shift to a circular economy,

Scientific Body

The international community should consider a dedicated inter-governmental scientific body, similar to the UNFCCC's IPCC, that will provide widely accepted scientific and technical guidance to implementing states and that will track progress of global reduction targets and monitor leakage of litter and microplastics into the ocean.

Support for Developing Countries

Mechanisms for financial and technical support for implementing countries should be considered in the global framework that includes capacity-building, R&D, and technology transfer to support actions by developing countries in terms of material reduction, recyclability improvement, redesign of materials as well as sustainable low-carbon waste/ material management schemes.

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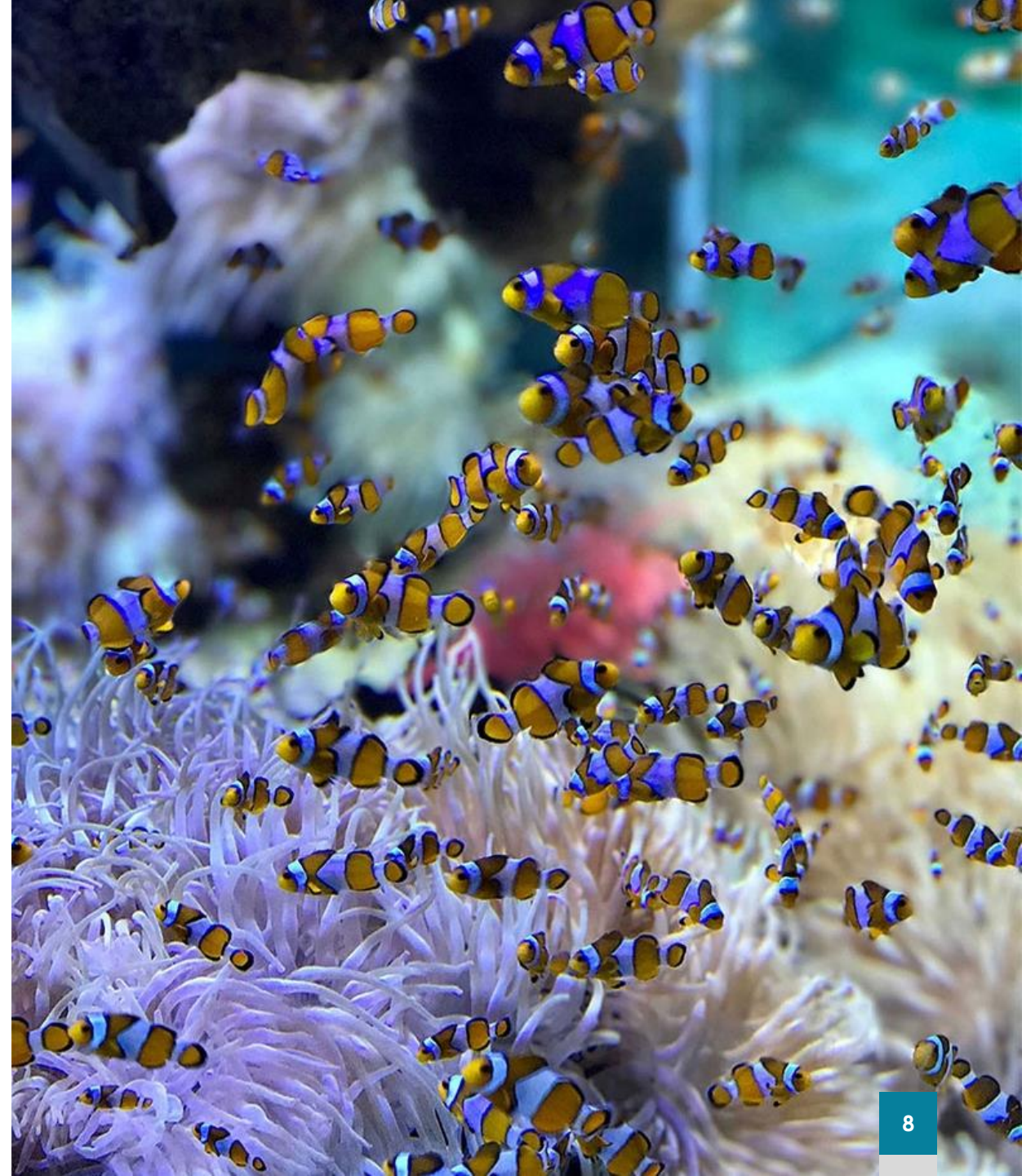
Plastic Waste in High Seas

Accountability for managing plastic waste that ends up in high seas is also a relevant issue for island or archipelagic countries like the Philippines.

Thus, transboundary movement of marine litter across high seas is more likely to end up on our shores. However, the resolution for this issue should be further fleshed out in a formal negotiation process.

Recommended Regional Response

- The Philippines recognizes the important work of the different regional programs and bodies to address marine plastic pollution such as the ASEAN, the COBSEA, the PEMSEA, and the CTI-CFF, among others.
- Since a comprehensive, integrated and multi-tiered approach is needed to address marine plastic pollution, it is critical that these various regional programs as well as the national interventions are aligned and should build on each other.
- Regional governance/coordinating bodies should create synergy among themselves that includes strengthening communication and coordination among programs, rationalizing plans to avoid duplication and address gaps, to consolidate information and to minimize redundant/double reporting,
- Regional efforts, however, are not enough. An overarching global framework must eventually guide these regional as well as national interventions to address marine litter and microplastics.



Recommended National Response

National Action Plan and Reduction Target. All countries should develop and implement a national action plan that sets out a measurable and time-bound target to reduce marine litter and microplastics. As a global framework is developed that will standardize calculation methods for setting baselines and tracking progress, countries should shift towards adopting such for comparison at the global level.

National EPR Scheme and Industry Engagement. Following the polluter pays principle, manufacturers and brand owners shall be accountable for the end-of-life impacts of their products and packaging before they are allowed in the market. This is a critical and innovative way of engaging industries.

Incentives to Reduce Demand/Consumption for Unnecessary Plastics. Levies may be imposed on certain single use plastics which will be plowed back to support waste management programs or marine litter reduction programs. Incentives may also be provided for innovative, sustainable, indigenous designs especially using indigenous local materials.

Recommended National Response

Strengthening Waste/Material Management Infrastructure and Systems.

At the local level, countries should be responsible for managing materials and wastes to ensure the use of these materials for as long possible and to prevent leakage into the environment.

Behavior Change. To promote a whole of nation approach, whereby all sectors contribute to the elimination of marine litter and microplastics, all stakeholders should be informed and educated, through formal and informal channels, optimizing the use of information and communication technology to change behaviors towards transformative business models in the use of source materials, production and design of plastic products, the use of less single-use or unnecessary plastic, and the management of waste/recovery of materials back into a circular loop.

THANK YOU

Presented by:
Engr. Vizmindia A. Osorio, OIC-Assistant Director
Environmental Management Bureau
Department of Environment and Natural Resources
The Philippines

