

**Short Summary of the Asian Pacific Regional Consultation Meeting
under the Ad hoc Open-ended Expert Group (AHEG)
of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA)
26-27, August 2020**

Ministry of the Environment Japan
15th Sep 2020

Background and Intended Outcomes of the Meeting

As Asia and the Pacific region has been seen as one of the major contributor to the global marine plastic pollution, the region's collective efforts - towards combatting marine plastic litter and microplastics by taking active part in the AHEG's intersessional work - is of global significance and merit. Many countries of Asia and Pacific region took part in the AHEG 3 (18-22 November 2019, Bangkok) and gained common understandings on issues, which are leading to greater engagement of the region in the intersessional work. This good momentum needs to be further strengthened and more countries must be encouraged to take part so that AHEG outcomes are of use and relevance to the region overall. In light of the above, the Ministry of the Environment, Japan (MoEJ), as member of the Bureau of the AHEG as well as the Chair of the Asian Pacific regional group(Chair: Satoru Iino from the MoEJ), organized a virtual meeting of the AHEG for countries in Asia and the Pacific to: 1) Share information on the progress and ongoing work of the AHEG intersession work 2) Discuss possible regional coordination mechanisms and 3) Facilitate consultations of the Chair and Bureau with the regions.

Time and Venue

26-27 August 2020 3-6pm Japan time (GMT+9)/
Venue: Web-base

Participants

- Member states
- UNEP as AHEG global Secretariat and Asia Pacific Office
- Selected regional experts on marine litter and microplastics
- International organizations

*There were 115 and 109 participants respectively

***Please be informed that the contents of the document were neutrally captured based on presentations and comments during the meeting but not reflected in a word-by-word manner.**

Day1 (26 August)

Agenda 2: Presentation from International Organizations

JICA introduced its cooperation approach on the waste sector, integrated waste management through 3Rs, and presented on four pillars to tackle the marine plastic issues; (1) developing a robust waste management system, (2) evidence-based approach, (3) introducing alternative materials/reduction of use and (4) encouraging networking and co-learning. ADB presented its action plan for healthy oceans and sustainable blue economies

in Asia and the Pacific and a regional technical assistance (a flagship program under the action plan) to reduce marine plastic pollution by boosting investment in circular economy and solid waste management.

Agenda 3: Stocktaking of existing activities and actions to reduce marine plastic litter and microplastics and an inventory of technical and financial resources or mechanisms for supporting countries in addressing marine plastic litter and micro-plastics

There were presentations from Iran, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, and UNEP. Presenters mentioned various countermeasures ranging from upstream to downstream, according to their national situations.

1 Policy framework such as national action plans and legal systems

- National management plan
- Waste management act
- Mandatory Packaging Reporting (MPR) framework

2 Prevention and reduction of plastic wastes

- Promotion of reduce, reuse, and recycle (“3R”) and circular economy of plastics
- Phasing out single-use plastics
- Preparation of “*Guideline for reducing plastic consumption in the country*”
- Introduction of Extended Producer Responsibility framework for managing packaging wastes

3 Environmentally-sound management and clean-up of marine plastic litter

- Improvement and development of a comprehensive waste management system in order to control waste at the source
- Promotion of public participation in waste collection and clean-up schemes such as beach clean-ups and incentives to local fishermen
- Measures to clean-up marine litter and sunken wastes

4 Promotion of innovative solutions

- Measures to develop alternatives to plastics such as biodegradable buoys and fishing gear
- Preparation of guidelines for use of biodegradable plastics
- Public-private partnerships to create innovative solutions regarding marine plastic
- Technological development for recycling marine debris including eco-friendly treatment or resource recovery of fishery waste

5 Technical and financial resources

- 3 main categories of technical resources
 - ✧ monitoring and review
 - ✧ waste management and recycling
 - ✧ systemic perspective on responsible production, design and use
- Innovative financing opportunities such as public-private initiatives, blended financing, and blue bonds

6 Sharing scientific information and knowledge

- Monitoring and evaluation programmes for marine debris and microplastics
- Harmonization of monitoring methods across nations
- Research and development regarding microplastics
- Investigation and estimation of domestic generation amount and routes of floating plastic

7 Multi-stakeholder involved solutions

- Awareness-raising campaigns to involve the public cooperating with local governments, NGOs, and

businesses

- Involving the private sector to take actions
- Working with environment groups

8 Promotion of regional cooperation

- ASEAN+3 Marine Plastic Litter Cooperation Action Initiative
- Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Debris
- ASEAN Framework of Action on Marine Debris, etc.

Agenda 4: Methodology for analysis of the effectiveness of potential and existing response options and activities

The UNEP Secretariat introduced the framework of the analysis.

- Bowtie analysis: considering what is, or could, be done to prevent waste and microplastics leaking into the environment (analysis of effectiveness of operational controls)
- Analysis of indicators: considering the inclusion of management controls to ensure the success of the operational activities (analysis of effectiveness of management controls)

Also, the UNEP shared the results of case studies of effectiveness analysis, which were regional marine litter action plans, microplastics and a new international framework. Participants pointed out what to be further considered, such as upstream measures to be appeared in the analysis, inclusion of regional framework, comparison of different approaches, feasibility of mechanisms, and technology development.

Day2 (27, August)

Agenda 5: Briefing from external experts

Dr. Isobe of Kyushu University, Japan and Dr. Daoji Li of East China Normal University reviewed marine plastic issues from a scientific standpoint. They emphasized the importance of policy making in line with scientific evidence based on monitoring and prediction. Participants received a message that governments are expected to establish a framework and provide resources for harmonized monitoring and data sharing.

Agenda 6: Potential response options

Participating member states mentioned key aspects of their ideas on potential response options as follows:

1. Sharing a global common long-term vision and targets

SDG 14.1, the Osaka Blue Ocean Vision, and UNEA Resolution 3/7 on the long-term elimination of discharge of litter and microplastics to the ocean and avoidance of detriment to marine ecosystem.

2. Combination of countermeasures through a life-cycle approach

In addition to a comprehensive life-cycle approach to reduce plastic pollution considering their national situations and on the specific barriers they were facing, reduction of plastic consumption and enhancement of waste/material management infrastructure and systems were emphasized.

3. National action plans taking into account national conditions

Most presenters reaffirmed UNEA resolution 3/7 that encourages all member States and invites other actors to develop and implement national action plans for preventing marine litter and microplastics

discharged into the ocean, taking into account national conditions.

3.1. Financial and technical assistance

The importance of a financial mechanism and technical assistance, including capacity building and technology transfer, to support states implementing countermeasures and/or national action plans was emphasized.

3.2. Scientific knowledge database

A science-based policy approach was pointed out as crucial to potential response options. Especially, many presenters mentioned developing of monitoring technology and establishing monitoring systems in order to identify sources and flows of plastics. Standard/harmonized monitoring and data reporting, and having an international scientific panel were also mentioned.

3.3. Sharing experiences and measuring the progress

Many member states emphasized the importance of sharing best practices for peer learning at the global level and of measuring the progress at the global level. It was mentioned that existing framework such as G20 implementation framework could be used for sharing experiences and measuring the progress and suggested a scientific panel for tracking global progress using the same methods.

4. Multi-stakeholder involvement

Many member states stressed the importance of private sector (especially industry) engagement and public awareness.

5. Structure

It was pointed out that marine litter does not follow national boundaries and that plastics cross borders from its upstream to downstream, which is the reason why plastic litter is a transboundary issue.

There were namely two types of discussion on a possible structure that materializes above mentioned four key aspects. Some mentioned that global response options should build-on and align with existing instruments, frameworks, partnerships, and actions. Some suggested establishing a new global agreement, which includes elements like global and national reduction targets, national action plans, scientific panel, and so on. It was also noted the nature of agreement as to whether it should be legally binding or voluntary. In either way of the structure, it was discussed we should continue elaborating on substance of the potential response options.