



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

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United Nations Environment Programme**
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Draft resolution on marine litter and microplastics

The United Nations Environment Assembly,

Reaffirming General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, by which the General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and therein Sustainable Development Goal 14 and its target 14.1, which seeks, by 2025, to “prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution”,

Recalling the United Nations Environment Assembly's decisions and recommendations on measures to reduce marine plastic litter and microplastics in the resolutions 1/6 “Marine plastic debris and microplastics” and 2/11 “Marine plastic litter and microplastics”,

Acknowledging the increased knowledge on the levels, sources, negative effects of, and measures to reduce marine litter and microplastics, as summarized in the UNEP 2016 Assessment report “Marine plastic debris and microplastics - Global lessons and research to inspire action and guide policy change”, the First World Ocean Assessment and numerous other reports and scientific publications,

Noting the UNEP/EA.3/INF/5 report “Combating marine plastic litter and microplastics: An assessment of the effectiveness of relevant international, regional and sub-regional governance strategies and approaches”, as requested in UNEA Resolution 2/11,

Noting the commitment of Member States to the “Our ocean, our future: call for action” Declaration adopted at the UN Ocean Conference in 2017 and the voluntary commitments presented there, at the Our Ocean Conferences (Washington D.C., USA, Valparaiso, Chile, and Valletta, Malta), and at UNEA-3, as well as the G20 Action Plan on Marine Litter decided in 2017, on efforts to prevent and reduce marine litter and microplastics,

Noting the International Coral Reef Initiative recommendation to reduce microbead pollution in the marine environment adopted in November 2016 and the call for action by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) Member Countries for a call for action for SPREP Members on plastic microbeads,

Noting with concern the high and rapidly increasing levels of marine plastic litter and the expected increase in negative effects on marine biodiversity, ecosystems, animal well-being, fisheries, maritime transport, recreation and tourism, local societies and economies, and the urgent need for strengthened knowledge on the levels and effects of micro- and nanoplastics on marine ecosystems, seafood and human health,

Recognizes with concern that natural disasters and increasingly severe weather events cause significant input of marine litter and microplastics to the marine environment,

Underlining that preventive action through waste minimization and environmentally sound waste management should be given the highest priority, and that this is especially important in geographical areas with the largest sources of marine plastic litter, *recognizing* that technology and effective measures already exist that may provide cost-effective, environmentally sound and locally and regionally adapted solutions,

Emphasizing that technology transfer on mutually agreed terms and resource mobilization from all sources are important elements to combatting marine litter and microplastics,

Acknowledging the challenges of addressing marine plastic pollution in the face of increasing production and consumption of plastic in products and packaging, and urging all countries and other stakeholders to make responsible use of plastic while endeavoring to reduce unnecessary plastic use, and to promote research and application of environmentally-sound alternatives.

1. *Stresses* the importance of long-term elimination of discharge of litter and microplastics to the oceans and of avoiding detriment to marine ecosystems and the human activities dependent on them from marine litter and microplastics;
2. *Urges* all actors to step up actions to “by 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution”;
3. *Encourages* also all Member States to, based on best available knowledge on sources and levels of marine litter and microplastics in the environment, prioritize policies and measures at appropriate scale, to avoid marine litter and microplastics entering the marine environment;
4. *Encourages* all Member States and invites other actors, taking into account the national conditions, to:
 - (a) fully implement the recommendations and actions in the UNEA 1/6 and 2/11 resolutions, as relevant, and *emphasizes* that these resolutions have important elements and guidance not repeated in this resolution,
 - (b) cooperate to establish common definitions and harmonized standards and methodologies for measurement and monitoring of marine litter and microplastics,
 - (c) develop and implement action plans for preventing marine litter and microplastics, encouraging resource efficiency, including prevention and increasing collection and recycling rates of plastic waste and re-design and re-use of products, materials and avoiding the unnecessary use of plastic and plastic containing chemicals of particular concern where appropriate,
 - (d) include where appropriate, marine litter and microplastics in regional, national and local waste management plans and in wastewater treatment,
 - (e) develop integrated and source-to-sea approaches to combat marine litter and microplastics from all sources, taking into account that plastic litter and microplastics are transported to the oceans from land-based sources by rivers and run-off or wind from land and that plastic litter is an important source for microplastics, and include the land/sea and freshwater/sea interface in action plans for preventing marine litter including microplastics,
 - (f) also step up measures to prevent marine litter and microplastics from sea-based sources, among others including fisheries, aquaculture, off-shore installations and shipping including through promoting the accessibility and the use of port reception facilities,
 - (g) encourage that, in plans to prevent and reduce damage from natural disasters and increasingly severe weather events, measures to prevent marine litter and microplastics are included, in particular from land-based sources,
 - (h) prioritize where feasible clean-up in the marine environment in areas where marine litter poses a significant threat to human health, biodiversity, wildlife or sustainable use and can be conducted cost-effectively and without harm to the ecosystems;
5. *Recognizes* that private sector and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, can contribute significantly to prevent and reduce marine litter and microplastics, including through information sharing, awareness raising, developing new environmentally sound technologies, capacity building and clean-up actions, and *encourages* the cooperation between governments, regional bodies, private sector, and civil society, including through the Global Partnership on Marine Litter and its regional nodes, to this end;

6. *Notes* the important role of key sectors such as plastic producers, retailers and the consumer goods industry as well as importers, packaging firms and transport firms to contribute to the reduction of marine litter, including microplastics, arising from their products and activities, as well as to provide information on the impacts arising from their products throughout their life-cycle, and encourages innovative approaches such as the use of extended producer responsibility schemes, container deposit schemes and other initiatives;

7. *Requests* the Executive Director, subject to the availability of resources, to strengthen the United Nations Environment Programme's capacity and activity on marine litter and microplastics, including through:

(a) strengthening the United Nations Environment Programme's contribution to the Global Partnership on Marine Litter,

(b) providing advice on the prioritizing of activities upon request based on best available scientific knowledge, and the most environmentally sound and cost-effective measures to prevent and reduce marine litter and microplastics, according to the UNEA resolutions 1/6, 2/11 and this resolution,

(c) facilitating the establishment and implementation of regional and national action plans to prevent and reduce litter and microplastics in the marine environment, as requested by Member States,

(d) supporting countries, upon request, in collaboration with other international organisations and relevant stakeholders, in closing data gaps and improving the availability of accessible data on sources and extent of marine litter and microplastics in the environment,

(e) closely liaising with other UN agencies to encourage them to support programmes to achieve marine litter and microplastic reduction;

8. *Invites* relevant international and regional organizations and conventions including inter alia the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the International Maritime Organization and its conventions, the Food and Agriculture Organization, Regional Fisheries Management Organizations / Arrangements, the Regional Seas Conventions and Programmes, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Strategic Approach for International Chemicals Management, as appropriate within their mandates, to increase their action to prevent and reduce marine litter and microplastics and their harmful effects, and coordinate where appropriate to achieve this end;

9. *Request* the Executive Director, subject to availability of resources, in cooperation with other relevant bodies and international initiatives, to compile the voluntary commitments as applicable targeting marine litter and microplastics and to provide an overview of their scope in support of the United Nations Environment Assembly's work on this issue and to better understand progress towards achieving SDG Target 14.1 and present this report to UNEA-4;

10. *Decides* to convene meetings of, subject to the availability of resources, an Ad Hoc Open Ended Expert Group, to further examine the barriers to, and options for, combating marine plastic litter and microplastics from all sources, especially land based sources, and:

(a) requests the Executive Director to provide the secretariat for this work,

(b) decides that the Ad Hoc Open Ended Expert Group will be informed by and build on inter alia relevant resolutions, decisions, and reports by the United Nations Environment Programme, other organizations, Member States, and stakeholders as appropriate,

(c) decides that the Ad Hoc Open Ended Expert Group will include experts with the relevant technical expertise from all Member States, representation from international and regional conventions and organizations and relevant stakeholders,

(d) decides that the Ad Hoc Open Ended Expert Group will have the initial Programme of Work:

(i) explore all barriers to combating marine litter and microplastics, including challenges related to resources in developing countries,

(ii) identify the range of national, regional and international response options, including actions and innovative approaches, and voluntary and legally binding governance strategies and approaches;

- (iii) identify environmental, social and economic costs and benefits of different response options;
 - (iv) examine the feasibility and effectiveness of different response options;
 - (v) identify potential options for continued work for consideration by the United Nations Environment Assembly,
- (e) decides to convene at least one meeting, but no more than two meetings, before UNEA-4, including enabling the participation of developing countries,
- (f) requests the Executive Director to provide a progress update on the Programme of Work, including on the results of the meeting(s) at UNEA-4,
- (g) decides to determine at UNEA-4 on the future direction, timing, and expected outcomes of the work;
11. *Requests* the Executive Director to report on the implementation of 1/6, 2/11 and this resolution to UNEA-4.