



UNITED NATIONS

ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT GROUP

EMG

Mid-Term Technical Segment of the 25th Senior Officials Meeting

EMG SOM25/mid-term/04b

20 May 2019

Distribution: EMG members

By video-audio conference

from 3:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Geneva time.

Issue Note: Implementation of the United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 4/6 Marine plastic litter and microplastics

1) Introduction and background

This concept note aims to invite the UN Environment Management Group (EMG) to engage in and contribute to the implementation of the UN Environment Assembly resolution on Marine plastic litter and microplastics adopted 15 March 2019 during the fourth session of the Assembly (UNEP/EA.4/6).¹

During the third session of the UN Environment Assembly², Member States requested the Executive Director to strengthen the capacity and activity of UN Environment on marine litter and microplastics, and called for the establishment of an Ad Hoc Open-ended Experts Group to (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 and (v) identify potential options for continued work for consideration by the United Nations Environment Assembly.

During the fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly, Member States reaffirmed the role of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Experts Group and under Operative Paragraph 8 *invited the Environment Management Group (EMG) to engage in and contribute to the Ad Hoc Open-ended Expert group on Marine Litter and Microplastics by providing inter alia a mapping of all relevant United Nations agencies, programmes, initiatives and expertise with relevance to marine litter including plastic litter and microplastics*. The Resolution also invited UN agencies to contribute to addressing marine litter through activities such as raising awareness and promoting environmentally sound management and marine plastic prevention.

¹ The said resolution is attached as an Annex 1 to this note, please note that a final review of the resolution is currently undergoing and will change from UNEP/EA.4/7 to UNEP/EA.4/6.

² The said resolution is attached as an Annex 2 to this note.

2) Role and contributions from the EMG

In light of the above, UN Environment invites the Environment Management Group to engage in implementation of the above-mentioned Resolutions in addressing the issue of marine litter and microplastics. It is suggested that a task team composed of interested agencies and coordinated by UN Environment be established with the purpose to:

- Undertake a mapping exercise of all initiatives and expertise with relevance to marine litter including plastic litter and microplastics, identifying possible gaps, areas of synergy and opportunities for further cooperation.
- Provide, based on the outcome of the mapping report, any further inputs to the work of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Expert group on Marine Litter and Microplastics as needed, to ensure a continued system-wide contribution to the implementation of the Resolution. A number of webinars will be organized by UN Environment to ensure a long-term engagement with UN agencies for this purpose.

It is envisaged that the results of the initial mapping exercise will be presented during the next meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics, planned to take place in November 2019. The meeting will focus on a review of a number of stock-taking exercises and inventories relevant to the resolution. This mapping exercise will contribute to the “state of action” and provide participants with an overview of the work of the UN in this area, which will be updated accordingly.

The final output of this exercise will be presented as an information document to the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly which will take place in February 2021.

3) Proposed timeframe

- **20 May 2019:** Introduction and briefing of this proposal during the Mid-term meeting of the EMG in Geneva including the presentation of a potential data collection methodology.
- **May – June 2019:**
 - Invitation by the Executive Director of UN Environment to the heads of UN agencies to nominate their focal point to the Task Team.
 - The refined data collection methodology will be shared with the Task Team.
 - Throughout this period UN Environment will organize a number of webinars with the Task Team members to discuss topic specific issues and recommendations on how to improve cooperation and further explore synergies and opportunities around the work of marine litter including plastic litter and microplastics.
- **September 2019:** EMG Senior Official Annual meeting.
 - Preliminary results of the Task Team including information compiled for the mapping report are presented
- **November 2019:** The preliminary results of the mapping exercise are presented during the Ad Hoc Open-ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics³.
- **December 2019 – onwards:** continue compiling information on new initiatives as well as building up on the relationship established with EMG members on the topic of marine litter including plastic litter and microplastics and explore ways to enhance synergies, for example through the work of the Global Partnership of Marine Litter (GPML), a multi-stakeholder partnership that brings together all actors working on marine litter to share knowledge and experience and to advance solutions to this pressing global issue.
- **Task Team meetings and webinars continued.**
- Report on Progress to 26th EMG Senior Officials.
- **February 2021:** Report back to the UN Environment Assembly.

³ Date and Venue to be confirmed.