



UNITED NATIONS

ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT GROUP

EMG

1st meeting of the Consultative Process on a Pollution-Free Planet

Tuesday, 15.02.2022

15:00 to 16:30 (Geneva time)

Microsoft Teams

Meeting Report

1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

Mr. Hossein Fadaei of the EMG Secretariat opened the first meeting of the Consultative Process on a Pollution-Free Planet. The agenda was approved without modifications.

2. Consideration of the draft Terms of Reference of the Consultative Process

Mr. Fadaei provided an overview of the process that led to the establishment of the Consultative Process.

- UNEA adopted a ministerial declaration in 2017 towards a pollution-free planet, and the related implementation plan was adopted two years later. UNEP made a proposal during the EMG midterm meeting in June 2021, inviting the EMG to establish a consultative process to accelerate the transition towards a pollution-free planet. This shall be achieved through an increased prioritization of efforts, consolidated and coordinated approaches, and enhanced partnerships and synergies in tackling pollution and its impacts.
- The Senior Officials established the Consultative Process at their 27th meeting in October 2021. As presented in the draft Terms of Reference, the objective for the time being is to prepare a system-wide common approach providing a framework for collective action in support of the implementation plan. The Consultative Process is also expected to respond to the UN Secretary General's request to unite efforts across the UN on solutions for challenges posed by plastic pollution. The latter will be the focus of the Consultative Process during the next six months.
- The scope of the process is linked to areas of pollution covered by the Implementation Plan (air, freshwater, marine, coastal, land and soil pollution as well as chemicals, and waste). The suggested deliverables include a mapping of existing efforts, roles, and mandates in the UN system, a common approach to tackling pollution, a facilitation of knowledge around this topic, and a joint messaging.
- The Consultative Process will build on previous work in this area, including that of the Task Team on Marine Litter and Microplastics, in which some colleagues and entities are still participating, and the former IMG on Chemicals and Waste.

- A core working group addressing the issue of plastic pollution will be established out of the Consultative Process in response to the Secretary General's request. The proposed timeline for 2022 is focused on responding to this request. The first meeting of the working group will be held in March.
- OHCHR submitted comments on the ToR in writing and highlighted that a pollution and toxic-free environment is key to establish the right to a healthy environment. Therefore, OHCHR and members of the IMG on Human Rights and Environment are looking forward to engaging with this process.
- UNU-FLORES mentioned that a pollution-free planet could be fostered for instance through financial and taxation incentives around plastic.
- UNICEF asked whether the Consultative Process was feeding into any political process. Mr. Fadaei made reference to ongoing debates in the context of UNEA 5.2 related to a global agreement on plastic pollution.
- UNECE asked whether it was possible to provide input to the work of the Core Working Group (CWG) on plastic pollution and requested more information about the relationship between the CWG and the Consultative Process. Mr. Fadaei replied that they differ in that the CWG on plastic pollution has a limited mandate to deliver on the task given by the SG within the next six months. The CWG will be composed of a limited number of members of the Consultative Process. It is an open and transparent process that will be delivered with focused attention by key organizations that wish to join this working group. Any interested agency is welcome. Once the CWG has concluded its work, the Consultative Process will focus on its other deliverables, which may take more than a year to complete.
- FAO suggested that the CWG could extend its scope to include not only marine litter and microplastics, but also plastic from different sectors, such as agricultural plastics. FAO inquired about the nature of the joint messaging. Mr. Fadaei clarified that the joint messaging is meant to highlight transformative solutions, taking a life-cycle approach. The language around the joint messaging could be further clarified in the ToR.

3. Establishment of a Core Working Group on Plastic Pollution

Ms. Brenda Koekkoek (UNEP) provided context to the creation of the CWG and an update on UNEA 5.2.

- During a meeting of the UN Senior Management Group in September 2021, the UN Secretary-General called for united efforts across the UN system on solutions for challenges posed by plastic pollution. He requested the Executive Director of UNEP to lead the preparation of a proposal for a working group to unite efforts across the UN system and with external stakeholders. To respond to this call and request, a Core Working Group is established within the EMG Consultative Process on a Pollution-Free Planet.
- A timeline of six months has been set for the work of the CWG. Priority is given to the delivery of joint messages to maximize the effectiveness of the communication across the UN system. These messages should inform how the UN system and stakeholders provide solutions to the challenge of plastic pollution. The CGW is also expected to prepare a common offer to support an inclusive and just transition towards a pollution free planet, as well as a set of targets and indicators on internal performance on reducing plastic pollution.

This scope of work may evolve with potential further developments at UNEA and with inputs from members of the CWG.

- Dealing with plastic pollution globally has increasingly attracted attention over the past few months, starting with the Ministerial Conference on plastic pollution at WTO, hosted by Germany, Ecuador, Ghana and Vietnam in September 2021. After this conference, a statement backed by over 75 countries was released, calling for an intergovernmental negotiating committee to be launched at UNEA 5.2 for a global legally binding instrument on plastic pollution. Last week, France hosted the One Ocean Summit, building momentum towards decisions at UNEA.
- Three resolutions are on the table at this moment. One is from Peru and Rwanda and is backed by over 50 countries, another from Japan and a third from India. The decision on plastic pollution is seen as a monumental decision. Member States are expected to find common ground on the solutions.
- Ms. Koekkoek shared a link to the [Geneva Environment Network High Level briefing](#), which provides information on UNEA. Since the first UNEA in 2014, governments have adopted resolutions addressing the issue of marine litter and microplastics, as well as various other related resolutions, such as on the sound management of chemicals and waste and sustainable consumption and production. This emphasises the high level of interest in this topic and the urgency of developing solutions for the global pollution crisis.
- Mr. Jose Dallo (Executive Office of the Secretary-General) mentioned that the meeting about plastic pollution with the Secretary General was exciting. Many heads of agencies provided insights on how the topic was related to their mandate. Plastics have a climate change footprint, an impact on our health, an impact on biodiversity, and more. Inclusive multilateralism can really prove useful here.
- The group needs to move quickly. There is interest and momentum to address pollution in many contexts, for instance the new chemicals agenda and the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. The UN should be prepared for landmark events, such as the UN Oceans Conference in Lisbon, which provide opportunities to rally the capacities of the UN system. The UN should also get ready for any implementation and support that could be provided to Member States.
- UNCTAD expressed interest in participating in the CWG and shared that they have engaged substantively in this area of work with many partners.
- WTO remarked that a group of 68 WTO members have adopted an important ministerial statement on plastics pollution last December and expressed interest in contributing to the CWG.

4. Next steps

- During 2022, the focus of the Consultative Process will be mainly on the CWG on plastic pollution. Progress on other deliverables of the Consultative Process, as per its ToR, may be made in parallel, but will likely advance once the CWG has completed its work. Members of the Consultative Process are welcome to provide further comments on the ToR. A revised version will be issued once the comments of the members are included.

- Members of the Consultative Process who wish to join the CWG are kindly asked to inform the EMG secretariat (emg@un.org). Around 10 contributing organisations would be ideal. The SG's call is clear, the group needs to start early and connect. The first meeting of this group will be held on 16 March. Preparatory efforts may be initiated online before this date.
- Mr. Fadaei remarked that external partners will also be invited to join the CWG. Members are invited to signal possible connections to relevant external partners which could be brought to the CWG on plastic pollution.
- ILO affirmed that plastics in production to consumption touch upon many economic activities and sectors. Hence, the world of jobs has a lot of interest in this topic, including in workers from the informal economy involved in waste and plastic collection. He stated that ILO would be keen to contribute to the working group.
- UNU-FLORES mentioned that the World Water Quality Alliance has drafted a project on a citizen science base for plastic pollution and has co-participatory processes for the science-policy interface. It might be interesting to connect with them.

5. Closure of the meeting

Mr. Fadaei closed the meeting by thanking colleagues for this effective start.