

Contribution by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

Written views in advance of the second informal in-person
meeting of Heads of Delegation to the INC (27-30 Sept 2026)

Cluster B

1. What considerations should guide decisions on determining which plastic products will require possible global measures, actions or cooperation?

Decisions on plastic products requiring global measures, actions or cooperation should be guided by a risk-informed approach that takes into account not only environmental and health impacts, but also implications for disaster risk and resilience.

Particular consideration should be given to plastic products that are most likely to contribute to disaster risk through their propensity to accumulate in waterways, drainage systems and other flood-prone areas, where they can obstruct water flows and exacerbate flooding.

Evidence shows that plastic pollution can increase exposure and vulnerability to disasters by aggravating flood risks and degrading ecosystems that provide critical protective functions, such as mangroves, wetlands, coral reefs and coastal vegetation. Plastic waste obstructing drainage systems and waterways is estimated to place at least **218 million people worldwide at risk of more severe and frequent flooding**, while plastic pollution also damages ecosystems that act as natural buffers against hazards, reducing their capacity to protect communities from floods, storm surges and coastal erosion¹.

In determining priorities for global action, Parties may wish to consider:

- The likelihood that a product will become mismanaged waste and contribute to pollution accumulation in disaster-prone environments, including drainage systems, rivers, coastlines and other accumulation zones.
- The extent to which a product contributes to the degradation of ecosystems that are essential for disaster resilience.
- The potential for products to generate significant waste streams during and after disasters, including through disaster response and recovery operations.
- The availability of safe, affordable and feasible alternatives, particularly in contexts vulnerable to disasters.

¹ <https://www.tearfund.org/stories/media/press-releases/2023/05/plastic-pollution-increases-flooding-risk-for-more-than-200-million-of-worlds-poorest-people>

- The feasibility of preventing leakage through resilient collection, recycling and waste management systems.

2. What type of enabling factors should be considered to address existing and legacy plastic pollution, including the process to identify and evaluate the locations or accumulation zones and subsequent remediation efforts?

Addressing existing and legacy plastic pollution should be supported by enabling factors that integrate disaster risk reduction considerations throughout identification, prioritization and remediation processes.

UNDRR recommends that the identification and evaluation of accumulation zones be informed by assessments of disaster risk. In addition to environmental criteria, priority should be given to areas where accumulated plastic pollution may increase the likelihood or severity of disasters or undermine resilience. These may include waterways and drainage systems associated with flood risk, coastal ecosystems that provide protection from storm surges, and locations where communities, infrastructure and livelihoods are highly exposed and vulnerable to hazards.

Key enabling factors include:

- Strengthened data collection, monitoring and risk assessment systems to identify pollution hotspots, track waste flows and understand interactions between plastic pollution and disaster risk.
- Research and knowledge-sharing on accumulation zones and their implications for flooding, ecosystem degradation, human health and community resilience.
- Investment in resilient waste management infrastructure and services to prevent further leakage while remediation efforts are undertaken.
- Coordination among environmental, disaster risk reduction, infrastructure, water management and local government authorities.
- Community engagement and locally led action, recognizing the important role of local knowledge and stewardship in identifying, monitoring and cleaning polluted sites.
- Adequate means of implementation, including finance, capacity-building and technology transfer, particularly for developing countries and countries in special situations.

Remediation activities should themselves be risk-informed and designed so as not to create new disaster risks. Clean-up and restoration efforts should be linked, where

appropriate, with the rehabilitation of ecosystems such as wetlands, mangroves and coastal areas that provide natural protection against hazards and contribute to resilience.

3. How can Parties cooperate in the implementation of effective waste management policies, taking into account the different national circumstances and needs?

UNDRR highlights the importance of cooperation to strengthen disaster-resilient waste management infrastructure, recognizing that disasters frequently disrupt waste management services and facilities, resulting in increased plastic leakage into the environment. Investments in resilient collection, segregation, recycling, transfer, treatment and disposal infrastructure can reduce such risks while ensuring continuity of essential services during and after hazardous events.

Parties can cooperate through:

- Sharing good practices, methodologies and lessons learned on resilient waste management systems and infrastructure.
- Supporting the application of risk-informed planning, infrastructure resilience reviews and hazard assessments in the design, upgrading and operation of waste management facilities.
- Facilitating capacity-building, technical assistance and technology transfer tailored to national and local needs.
- Mobilizing financial resources for resilient waste management infrastructure, particularly in developing countries and countries highly exposed to disasters and climate-related hazards.
- Strengthening cooperation among environment, infrastructure, climate and disaster risk reduction institutions at national, regional and international levels.
- Promoting data-sharing and collaborative approaches to monitoring plastic leakage, disaster impacts and infrastructure vulnerabilities.
- Supporting locally appropriate solutions, including circular economy approaches, community-based initiatives and maintenance strategies adapted to specific hazard contexts.

Experiences from a variety of country contexts demonstrate that resilient waste management can be strengthened through combinations of infrastructure investment, community engagement, data and monitoring systems, circular economy incentives and

cross-sectoral coordination. International cooperation should enable Parties to select and adapt these approaches according to their national circumstances, capacities and risk profiles.

UNDRR encourages Parties to recognize disaster-resilient waste management infrastructure as a key enabling condition for preventing plastic leakage, reducing disaster risk and strengthening long-term resilience.

Key resources

- Information submitted by UNDRR to INC-5.1:
<https://wedocs.unep.org/items/a783d184-dc48-49b7-b81a-f96c2c0a073e>
- Strategies for disaster-resilient plastic waste management:
<https://www.preventionweb.net/publication/documents-and-publications/reducing-plastic-pollution-and-after-natural-hazard-related>
- UNDRR webpage on plastic pollution and disasters:
<https://www.undrr.org/implementing-sendai-framework/sendai-framework-action/plastic-pollution-and-disasters>