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**United Nations
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United Nations Environment
Programme**

**Ad hoc open-ended expert group
on marine litter and microplastics
Second meeting
Geneva, 3–7 December 2018**

Workshop on information and monitoring

Note by the secretariat

I. Background

1. At the first meeting of the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics, monitoring, data and research emerged as a key topic which could benefit from additional discussion by the expert group, possibly through a workshop format. For that reason, the second meeting of the ad hoc open-ended expert group has been structured to include workshop discussions in contact groups on the first day of the meeting to facilitate collective reflection and informal interaction between the experts.
2. The present note is intended to facilitate discussion on information and monitoring of marine litter and microplastics, bearing in mind Sustainable Development Goal target 14.1 (by 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, particularly from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution).
3. In their discussions, participants are invited to explore the options for information and monitoring set out in the consolidated document containing the four discussion papers presented at the first meeting of the ad hoc open-ended expert group (UNEP/AHEG/2018/2/2). In so doing, they are invited to take into consideration different aspects of the management of marine litter and microplastics, including risks, opportunities and synergies, and, as far as possible, relevant costs and benefits.
4. The following areas, which were highlighted at the first meeting and summarized by the Co-Chairs, have been identified for further focused discussion:
 - (a) Coordination across the United Nations system;
 - (b) Innovation and technologies;
 - (c) Internationally agreed environmental goals, programmes, platforms and initiatives;
 - (d) Environmental baselines;
 - (e) Social and economic impacts;
 - (f) Enabling conditions.

II. Information and monitoring: barriers and opportunities

5. Key barriers and potential opportunities in relation to information and monitoring for discussion by the contact group on that topic include:

Barriers

Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No international legally binding agreement, interministerial cooperation or harmonized, binding standards on marine litter pollution from marine plastic waste, including contamination regulations for foods and ecosystems, or measurable targets or timelines at the global level for the reduction of marine pollution, particularly from land-based sources • Limited number and information on legal instruments or incentives to reduce unnecessary and difficult to recycle plastics or shedding of microplastics during use, such as due diligence, “polluter pays” principle, extended producer responsibility schemes, or any form of global liability and compensation mechanism • Lack of single national authority or body responsible for overseeing the collection of information and monitoring, particularly on the high seas • Lack of overarching national strategies that provide stability for industry investment, and to stimulate flow of funds from the national to the local levels • Lack of policy drivers to stimulate end-markets such as supply and demand for recycled material
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of information on extent and impacts of fossil fuel and other perverse forms of subsidies that disincentivize solutions • Lack of funds to undertake research, gather information and monitor environmental, social and economic baselines, social and economic impacts, policy drivers, economic incentives, production, consumption, trade, and end-of-life treatment, and to monitor the impacts of market-based instruments and tax incentives to stimulate investment in local infrastructure for the collection, treatment or disposal, and the environmentally and financially sustainable end-of-life treatment, of plastic waste
Technological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of inclusion of overarching principles – sustainable consumption and production, circular economy, extended producer responsibility, protection of human health and biodiversity • Insufficient information on the use of recycled materials in products and innovative technological infrastructure, especially in rural areas, for waste management and recycling, dealing with alternative materials, retention of microplastics in wastewater treatment and sludge and monitoring and diagnostic technologies to enable national bodies to evaluate compliance with environmental standards • Absence of data to support a coordinated development and adoption of labelling standards for reuse and recyclability of products
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of harmonized, monitoring methodologies and data on the sources, flows and extent of plastics and microplastics in the marine environment, their impacts on human health, food chains and ecosystems and associated risks and costs • Lack of global and national reporting standards on the production, consumption, use, end-of-life or final treatment and trade of plastic that will eventually become waste, including if traded waste is mismanaged, by going to landfill rather than licensed facilities (see options 2 and 3 in document UNEP/AHEG/2018/2/INF/3)

Opportunities

Option 1	Status quo – e.g., no official global monitoring of marine litter, but some monitoring is tackled through existing multilateral agreements, including the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, and regional seas programmes
Option 2	Voluntary approach – e.g., opportunities to develop new monitoring and information inputs using novel technologies according to local capacities and needs
Option 3	Legally binding agreement – e.g., opportunities for consistent long-term monitoring, information and research activities

III. Rules of engagement

6. To enable all the experts to express their opinions and participate effectively, experts will be invited to join one of several contact groups. The discussions in each group will be led by two co-facilitators, one from among the government participants and one from among the stakeholder and major groups participants, taking gender, geography and areas of interest into consideration, and will also include senior experts and a note-taker from the secretariat. The co-facilitators will be designated by the co-chairs of the ad hoc open ended expert group.

7. Participants are invited to refer to the background assessments and consolidated paper (UNEP/AHEG/2018/2/2),¹ and consider the current state of information and monitoring, data gaps and potential ways for improving the monitoring of marine litter and microplastics.

8. Proceedings will be undertaken in English, with interpretation available in one contact group only. The format of the meeting will be informal; all the experts are invited to speak during the discussions.

IV. Points to consider and expected outcomes

9. The main outcome of the contact group discussions will be a set of recommendations, to be presented to the plenary for further consideration, on information and monitoring, proposals on ways to overcome the different barriers, ways of improving synergies with existing legal instruments and the pros and cons of different international response options, as well as national and regional responses, further to discussions at the first meeting of the ad hoc open-ended expert group in June 2018, as presented in the consolidated report.

10. The final recommendations for each topic will be integrated into an outcome document to be presented at the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly.

11. While the discussions will be informal, each of the contact groups will address four questions in relation to their specific theme as well as barriers (listed above for the theme of information and monitoring). The questions are intended to guide the experts in their discussions. The contact groups may also wish to highlight additional aspects during the course of their discussions.

12. For the theme of information and monitoring, the four questions are as follows:

- (a) What are the main priorities in information and monitoring?
- (b) How can existing legal instruments support these priorities?
- (c) What are the implications of options 1, 2 and 3 (see document UNEP/AHEG/2018/2/2) for information and monitoring?
- (d) What are the next steps to be taken to address barriers and opportunities?

13. In addressing those questions, the contact group may wish to consider the following questions:

- (a) What could be the suggested elements of a voluntary or binding architecture for monitoring? How could this link with monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals?
- (b) How should national information include both information related to the sources and information related to the final location of pollutants?
- (c) What role could regional or global data collection and modelling play in better understanding the status and flows of marine litter and microplastics? How could regional and global partnerships and institutions support data collection and modelling?
- (d) What role can citizens or citizen science play in information and monitoring?
- (e) How could the areas beyond national jurisdiction² be monitored and assessed?

¹ To facilitate discussions at its second meeting, at its first meeting the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics requested the secretariat to consolidate into a single document the four discussion papers presented at the meeting: documents UNEP/AHEG/2018/1/2, UNEP/AHEG/2018/1/3, UNEP/AHEG/2018/1/4 and UNEP/AHEG/2018/1/5. The four discussion papers and the consolidated document are available from: <https://papersmart.unon.org/resolution/adhoc-oeeeg> and <https://papersmart.unon.org/resolution/second-adhoc-oeeeg>.

² “Areas beyond national jurisdiction” means the seabed and ocean floor and subsoil thereof, beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.