

## Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) 29 November 2018

### Submission to the second ad hoc Open-ended Experts Group Meeting on Marine Litter and Microplastics, 3 to 7 December 2018, Geneva

#### I. Current Context

1. The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) is a voluntary policy framework to promote and implement chemical safety globally that is administered by UN Environment. It is unique in its ambition as an inclusive multi-stakeholder, multi-sector framework, providing the space and opportunity for governments, industry, non-government organizations, international organizations and academics to discuss, coordinate and act on chemicals throughout their life cycle in an atmosphere of trust and cooperation. Strategic Approach stakeholders work across sectors and ministries to achieve results, including health, agriculture, industry, energy, environment, labour and manufacturing.
2. The Strategic Approach overall objective is embedded in target 12.4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: by 2020, achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all waste throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international frameworks, and significantly reduce their release to air, water and soil in order to minimize their adverse impacts on human health and the environment. The Strategic Approach contributes to the overall agenda of sustainable development goal 12, to ensure sustainable consumption and production
3. At its fourth session in 2015, SAICM's Governing Body, the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM), recognized the need to start considering arrangements for the period beyond 2020. Specifically, ICCM initiated an intersessional process to prepare recommendations on SAICM and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020 for consideration by the ICCM at its fifth session in 2020.
4. The scope of SAICM today is broad and currently does not expressly address marine plastic litter or microplastics. Nevertheless, it could provide a key pillar for cooperative action at the global level in the future, including in capacity building and in promoting innovation. SAICM's emerging policy issues address a number of areas linked to marine plastic litter and microplastics, such as endocrine-disrupting chemicals, nanomaterials and the promotion of chemicals related information within product value chains.
5. Substances such as BPAs and certain phthalates have raised concerns of some stakeholders about the risk of adverse effects on human health and/or the environment in the plastics lifecycle, and these concerns have motivated some regulators and businesses to take action.

#### II. Key linkages to the Marine Plastic Litter and Microplastics Assessment<sup>1</sup>

6. The assessment indicates that chemical additives used in the lifecycle of plastics are numerous and the risks to human health and the marine environment are not adequately reflected in legal and policy frameworks at the international and regional level.
7. Furthermore, the assessment highlights that gaps exist in the scientific knowledge-base, including the effects of nanoplastics and chemical additives on human health and the environment.

<sup>1</sup> UN Environment, 2017. Combating marine plastic litter and microplastics: An assessment of the effectiveness of relevant international, regional and subregional governance strategies and approaches.

Prioritizing research into methodologies for assessing the effects of these on marine species and humans can assist in providing robust data sets to identify trends at local, regional and global level.

8. One of the key messages from the assessment suggests the Strategic Approach can provide a voluntary foundation for managing those chemicals not regulated under the Stockholm Convention and assist in setting national reduction targets. The Strategic Approach is already set up to share knowledge and best practices, facilitate cooperation and bring together stakeholders from different sectors to address issues of concern.

### III. Looking ahead

9. The on-going discussions for the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020 provide opportunities for new programmatic areas and focus in moving forward, including opportunities to address marine litter and microplastics.

10. In addition to the current SAICM platform, a new policy platform on chemicals and waste, which is under development provides a unique new space for dialogue and action for multiple stakeholders to define coordinated approaches and actions to implement solutions across the lifecycle and promote innovation.

11. Furthermore, the new platform could provide an entry point to work with multiple actors within supply chains, including considerations of the broader management of chemical additives used in the manufacturing of plastics as well as end-of-life processes such as recycling at the global level, while complementing initiatives under the chemicals and waste related conventions.

12. The third Strategic Approach Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) will take place in Montevideo, Uruguay from 2-4 April 2019. A key element of discussion at the meeting will be the consideration of the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020, including the consideration of the scope, objectives and targets for the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020.

13. Stakeholders wishing to participate in the Open-ended Working Group meeting and / or provide information materials to the meeting should contact the Strategic Approach secretariat at [saicm.chemicals@unep.org](mailto:saicm.chemicals@unep.org).

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