

Proposed response template on written submissions prior to INC-3 (part b)

Potential Areas Identified by the Contact Groups

At its second session, the intergovernmental negotiating committee (INC) requested the secretariat to invite written submissions on:

- Any potential areas for intersessional work compiled by the co-facilitators of the two contact groups¹, to inform the work of INC-3.

The template below was prepared by the secretariat, in consultation with the Chair, and is meant as a guide to assist Members and Observers in preparing their written submissions.

All written submissions must be sent to unep-incplastic.secretariat@un.org. The submissions received will be made available on the INC webpage.

Please note that not all fields in the template need to be answered in the submission.

Deadline for submissions:

- I. By **15 August 2023** for written submissions from **observer** organizations.
- II. By **15 September 2023** for written submissions from **Members** of the Committee.

¹ Contact Group 1 focused on Section A: Objective(s). Section B: Substantive Obligations; Contact Group 2 focused on Sections C: Means of Implementation. D: Implementation measures. E: Additional matters as contained in part II of the Annex to document UNEP/PP/INC.2/4.

TEMPLATE FOR SUBMISSIONS

Name of country (for Members of the committee)	Republic of Korea
Name of organization (for observers to the committee)	
Contact person and contact information for the submission	<p>Jung, Ji Hoon First Secretary Green Diplomacy Division Ministry of Foreign Affairs jhjung@mofa.go.kr / greengrowth@mofa.go.kr</p> <p>Kim, Jong Woo Second Secretary Green Diplomacy Division Ministry of Foreign Affairs jwokim22@mofa.go.kr</p> <p>Lee, Hyeon Seok Deputy Director Chemicals Industry Team Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy lhs21@korea.kr</p> <p>Kang, Ye Ji Deputy Director Marine Conservation Division Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries yejikang@korea.kr</p> <p>Moon, You Sang Deputy Director Resource Circulation Policy Division Ministry of Environment adt4773@korea.kr</p> <p>Youm, Seung Keon Deputy Director International Cooperation Bureau Ministry of Environment ysk123@korea.kr</p>
Date of submission	September 15, 2023

Input on the potential areas of intersessional work to inform the work of INC-3 (following the lists compiled by the co-facilitators of the two contact groups)

Potential areas for intersessional work

The list of potential areas for possible intersessional work compiled by the co-facilitators of the two contact groups at INC-2 is set out below. Members and observers may wish to provide input on one or more of these areas.

Contact group 1:

1. Information on definitions of, e.g. plastics, microplastics, circularity
2. Information on criteria, also considering different applications and sectoral requirements, including:
 - a. Chemical substances of concern in plastics,
 - b. Problematic and avoidable plastic polymers and products and related applications
 - c. Design e.g. for circularity, reuse
 - d. Substitutes and alternatives to plastic polymers and products
3. Potential substances of concern in plastics, problematic and avoidable plastic polymers and products
4. Potential sources of release of microplastics (applications and sectors).

(Please note: A longer list is included in the co-facilitators report on discussions in contact group 1². Submissions may also include input on any of the items in that longer list, such as, amongst others, the development of criteria to prioritise problematic and avoidable plastics; the development of targets for the reduction, reuse and repair of problematic and avoidable plastic products; or the guidelines on EPR)

² The report can be accessed here: <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/42621/CG1.pdf>.

Contact Group 2:

1. To consider the potential role, responsibilities and composition of a science and technical body [to support negotiation and/or implementation of the agreement]
2. To consider potential scope of and guidance for National Action Plans [including optional and/or suggested elements]
3. To identify current provisions within existing MEAs [and other instruments] on cooperation and coordination that could be considered
4. To consider how other MEAs provide for monitoring, and suggest best practice
5. To consider options to define 'technology transfer on mutually agreed terms
6. To further consider how a potential financing mechanism could work [including a new standalone mechanism, a hybrid mechanism, or an existing mechanism]
7. To identify options to mobilise and align private and innovative finance (including in relation to matters at 24(e) and the proposed Global Plastic Pollution Fee (GPPF))
8. To map current funding and finance available [to address plastic pollution] and determine the need for financial support for each Member
9. To identify capacity building and training needs for each Member.

Inputs relating to potential areas for intersessional work. Please identify clearly which area your input relates to.

Information on definitions of, e.g. plastic, microplastics, circularity.

Defining the precise terminology for plastic and microplastics is essential, with particular emphasis on the intersessional work required to establish clear parameters regarding their size, scope, and categorization as primary (intentionally manufactured, e.g. microbeads) or secondary microplastic (resulting from the breakdown of larger plastic items).

- A. **Plastics:** Solid material comprising of one or more polymeric compounds as essential components, shaped by heat or pressure during polymerization or in the production of the final product.
- B. **Circularity:** Preventing environmental pollution caused by plastic waste and maximizing reuse, recycling, replacement, and other forms of responsible resource management of waste materials.
- C. **Microplastics:** Depending on their origin, microplastics can be classified into primary (intentionally-added) microplastics or secondary (unintentionally released) microplastics based on occurrence patterns.
 - i. The definition of microplastics varies among countries and institutions, lacking a common standard. Definition related to the size of the microplastics should be established considering future research results, such as effect on human health and environment.

- ii. **Primary (Intentionally-added) Microplastic:** Microplastics deliberately added for specific purposes, with a relatively clear pathway of generation, allowing for manageable regulation. Examples include microbeads, detergents, fertilizers and et cetera.
- iii. **Secondary (Unintentionally released) Microplastics:** Microplastics generated through wear and tear or natural processes during plastic use, disposal, etc., with unclear pathways of generation.
- iv. **Similar size microparticles :** Micro-particles generate from ceramic base materials and metal base materials, which size is identical with microplastics.

Information on criteria

- A. **Chemical Substances of Concern in Plastics:** Chemicals, polymers, additives, plasticizers, flame retardants and et cetera, that could have direct or indirect adverse effects on human health throughout the lifecycle of plastics (manufacturing, use, disposal).
 - v. The selection of regulated substances should be based on scientific evidence, considering real exposure scenarios.
 - vi. Providing control methods for plastics of concern that have manageable impacts.
 - vii. It is necessary to consider the feasibility of resolving the problems of the concerned chemicals and products in management and manufacturing processes through technology application when selecting the chemicals and products of concern
 - viii. It is also necessary to take into consideration the possibility of substitutes and replacements when selecting the chemicals and products of concern.
- B. **Problematic and Avoidable Plastic Polymers and Products:** Plastic types and products that contribute to increasing plastic waste, such as single-use plastics, short-lived plastics, unnecessary packaging, and plastics that hinder recycling. However considering the alternative materials or product, the LCA should be considered with current use of plastics.
- C. **Design for Circularity:** The approach involves designing products to minimize waste generation while simultaneously improving the processes of reuse, recycling and other responsible resource management methods.
 - i. Producing single material containing less than 10% of other materials products, and enhancing the structure and form of the products to meet the environmental standards
 - ii. Evaluating the potential for circular use and recyclability of products based on their design can be an effective tool to enhance design for circularity
- D. **Substitutes and Alternatives:** Materials and/or substances that can replace traditional plastics and their use (ie. Single-use plastics)
 - i. Bioplastics can be used as an alternative to petroleum-based plastics, but it is essential to utilize them in environmentally beneficial areas based on clear definitions and principles to prevent greenwashing. It can be used as a substitute for compostable or easily recyclable plastic.
 - ii. Single-use plastics can be substituted by the expansion of usage of reusable containers and packaging, which may lead to the reduction of plastic use. Establishing official standards, guidelines and certification for processes for the reusable containers and packaging, such as renting and cleaning, will expand their applications. Additionally, offering incentives to consumers who use reusable plastics instead of single-use plastics or packaging materials will be effective.

Potential sources of release of microplastics

- A. **Primary (Intentionally-added) microplastics:** Products like cleansers, shampoos, toothpaste, cosmetics, detergents, fertilizers and others contain micro-beads, and leaked microplastics during production, use, and disposal.
 - i. Regulation may be imposed on cleaning products, laundry detergents, cosmetics, toothpaste, and quasi- drugs.

- B. **Secondary (Unintentionally released) microplastics:** Microplastics generated through artificial or natural wear and tear, fragmentation, or other processes during the use and disposal of plastics with generally unclear pathways of generation. Since it is necessary to recognize that a large part of marine microplastics is composed of secondary microplastics, the sources of microplastics leakage should be analyzed. Management measures suitable for each field should be covered in the annex.
 - i. Regulating secondary microplastics may be challenging at the current level of research. It is essential to thoroughly research and provide a comprehensive demonstration before developing specific guidelines for microplastic prevention.
 - ii. Therefore, it is necessary to adopt a phased approach focusing on research development in identifying the levels of microplastics in the environment and sources, devising mitigation strategies, such as applying design measures to prevent microplastics generation from the product manufacturing stage, and providing accurate labelling for the disposal method and so on.

Given the variations in national plastic waste management systems and infrastructure, it is imperative to establish an instrument that allows for the utilization of efficient methods tailored to each country's circumstances. .

Recycling Techniques: It is necessary to enhance the recyclability of plastic products from the manufacturing and design stages, focusing on high-quality recycling. However, attempting to recycle all waste plastics uniformly is inefficient and practically unfeasible. The scope of recycling may also vary depending on each country's circumstances and may also include fuelization or waste-to-energy method.

- i. Maximizing mechanical recycling while also utilizing chemical and thermal and organic recycling to complement the shortcomings of mechanical recycling is essential.
- ii. Mechanical recycling requires high-quality recycling feedstock and is challenging to apply to contaminated plastic waste. Repeated recycling may also compromise the quality of recycled plastics.
- iii. Chemical recycling can complement the limitations of mechanical recycling and also contribute to the promotion of high-quality recycled materials utilization
- iv. For plastics that are very challenging to recycle, it may be more efficient to convert them into energy sources, such as through waste-to-energy process, rather than landfilling and incinerating them

Improving waste sorting and Recycling Capacity: It is essential for each country to strengthen its separation and recycling systems to prevent the release of macro and microplastics into

ecosystems such as oceans and soils. Efficient and environmental-friendly waste sorting and recycling not only prevent plastic waste from entering ecosystems but also increase recycling rates.

Utilizing Existing National Systems: The new instrument should respect each country's existing policies and systems, such as EPR (Extended Producer Responsibility) and circularity assessments, and should aim to complement these well-managed policies and systems with additional benefits.

- i. Improving management through a new instrument is valuable, but maximizing the benefits of existing national policies and systems is also essential.
- ii. Establishing platforms for harmonizing excellent national policies and systems would be beneficial.

National Plastic Usage Patterns: Managing plastics uniformly across countries can be challenging due to differences in plastic product usage patterns.

- i. Particularly, variations in the management technology for specific plastics in their entire product life cycle result in different levels of harmfulness of the products among countries. For instance, harmfulness of concerned polymers can be eliminated by employing residue monomer removal technology in the manufacturing process (eg.PVC).
- ii. Furthermore, plastics with longer product life may have been produced using outdated technology and could pose risks, whereas those produced with modern technology may not.

Trade: To implement trade measures for plastic products between countries, mutual agreements between the Parties are essential. Before implementing any trade measures, the views of the private sector, consumers, and other related stakeholders need to be considered in advance.

Discussing measures and voluntary approaches to addressing the ghost fishing gear: To address the ghost fishing gear problem effectively, it is essential to explore diverse measures, including implementing a gear real-name system, establishing a deposit system, and advancing the development of eco-friendly buoys and fishing gear. Nevertheless, when it comes to regulatory measures and voluntary approaches concerning fishing gear, a cautious, step-by-step approach should be adopted, taking into account the unique circumstances and fishing characteristics of each country's fisheries.

Awareness-Raising: While the efforts of individual countries and companies are pivotal in reducing plastic pollution, global cooperation is indispensable to end plastic pollution. Collaborative coordination among all Parties is essential to bolster worldwide awareness-raising initiatives.