

SUBMISSION: United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

Name of organization (for observers to the committee)	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)
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Elements not discussed at INC-2

1. Scope

What is the proposed scope for the future instrument?

Which types of substances, materials, products and behaviors should be covered by the future instrument?

Proposed scope:

Include, as one of the reasons for addressing plastic pollution, the preservation of ecosystems' resilience and the reduction of the risk of disasters.

Explanatory text:

Plastic pollution increases the risk of disasters – for example, by putting more than 200 million of the world's poorest people at risk of more severe and frequent flooding, and by worsening droughts through soil pore blockages from microplastics. Plastics also reduce ecosystems' ability to adapt to climate change and are a substantial contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. Hazards arising from inadequate plastic waste management is a growing global concern, and in the long-term, water and food security may also be impacted by plastic pollution.

Sources:

- UNDRR (2019). 2019 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction, page 136. <https://gar.undrr.org/report-2019.html>
- UNDRR (2020). Words into Action: Nature-Based Solutions for Disaster Risk Reduction, page 131. <https://www.undrr.org/words-action-nature-based-solutions-disaster-risk-reduction>
- McVeigh, K. (2023, May 24). Plastic waste puts millions of world's poorest at higher risk from floods. *The Guardian*. www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/may/24/plastic-waste-puts-millions-of-worlds-poorest-at-higher-risk-from-floods
- Xing, X., Yu, M., & Xia, T. (2021). Interactions between water flow and microplastics in silt loam and loamy sand. *Soil Science Society of America Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/saj2.20337>
- (n.d.). *Plastic Pollution*. UNEP. <https://www.unep.org/plastic-pollution>

Proposed scope:

Commit to safer transportation of plastics to avoid disasters which can exacerbate plastic pollution.

Explanatory text:

Plastic pollution is aggravated by transportation disasters, particularly those occurring during ocean shipping, since over 80 of the volume of international trade in goods is carried by sea. These disasters have released thousands of tons of polymers into the environment just in the past few years. Recent examples include the 2021 Xpress Pearl disaster and the 2012 Hong Kong Plastics Disaster.

Sources:

- Bourzac, K. (2023, January 22). *Grappling with the biggest marine plastic spill in history*. Chemical and Engineering News. <https://cen.acs.org/environment/pollution/marine-plastic-spill-xpress-pearl-nurdle/101/i3>
- (n.d.). *Hong Kong plastic disaster*. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hong_Kong_plastic_disaster
- George, S. (2022, September 27). *Plastic pollution: Shipping sector urged to crack down on nurdle spills*. Edie. <https://www.edie.net/plastic-pollution-shipping-sector-urged-to-crack-down-on-nurdle-spills/>
- McVeigh, K. (2021, November 29). *Nurdles: The worst toxic waste you've probably never heard of*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/nov/29/nurdles-plastic-pellets-environmental-ocean-spills-toxic-waste-not-classified-hazardous>
- Placek, M. (2022, June 20). *Ocean shipping worldwide - statistics & facts*. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/topics/1728/ocean-shipping/#topicOverview>

Proposed scope:

Include the term “resilient” in provisions related to waste management.

Explanatory text:

Disasters can exacerbate plastic pollution by destabilizing waste management systems and infrastructure, including recycling programmes. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, funding directed to waste management infrastructure was reappropriated for other means and many recycling services around the world were suspended, including in at least 30 US cities. Earthquakes, floods, and other types of disasters can cause significant damage to infrastructure, including to waste separation and processing facilities. Designing resilient waste management and other relevant critical infrastructure systems is crucial to avoid the increase in plastic pollution when disasters hit.

Sources:

- Ford, D. (2023, August 17). *COVID-19 Has Worsened the Ocean Plastic Pollution Problem*. *Scientific American*. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/covid-19-has-worsened-the-ocean-plastic-pollution-problem/>
- Nsikak, B., David, B., & Thavamani, P. (2021). COVID pollution: Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on global plastic waste footprint. *Heliyon*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e06343>
- Love, B., & Rieland, J. (2020, June 23). COVID-19 is laying waste to many US recycling programs. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/covid-19-is-laying-waste-to-many-us-recycling-programs-139733>

Proposed scope:

Commit to finding alternatives to minimize the use of plastics during disaster relief efforts.

Explanatory text:

Disasters also exacerbate plastic pollution by increasing the consumption of single-use plastic, for example by relying on bottled water and disposable personal protective equipment during emergency relief efforts. A significant amount of plastic waste can be produced during disaster relief operations. While plastics currently play a vital role in emergency response efforts, developing and employing alternatives to the wasteful use of plastics in disaster response and relief efforts is key.

Sources:

- UNDRR (2020). Words into Action: Nature-Based Solutions for Disaster Risk Reduction, page 133. <https://www.undrr.org/words-action-nature-based-solutions-disaster-risk-reduction>
- Peng, Y., Wu, P., Schartup, A., & Zhang, Y. (2021). Plastic waste release caused by COVID-19 and its fate in the global ocean. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of USA. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.211153011>
- UNEP, 2021. Drowning in Plastics – Marine Litter and Plastic Waste Vital Graphics, Chapter 9. <https://wedocs.unep.org/xmlui/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/36964/VITGRAPH.pdf>
- UNEP, 2019. SIDS Waste Management Outlook. http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/27683/SIDS_WMO.pdf

2. Principles

What principles could be set out in the future instrument to guide its implementation?

Proposed principle: Risk-informed decision-making.

Explanatory text:

The principle of risk-informed decision-making is set out in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030:

Disaster risk reduction requires a multi-hazard approach and inclusive risk-informed decision-making based on the open exchange and dissemination of disaggregated data, including by sex, age and disability, as well as on easily accessible, up-to-date, comprehensible, science-based, non-sensitive risk information, complemented by traditional knowledge.

This principle strongly applies to the reduction of plastic pollution. Reducing plastic pollution can contribute to reducing the risk of disasters (particularly caused by flooding and storms) and negative environmental, economic and social consequences. In addition, plastic pollution can in and of itself be characterized as a slow-onset disaster originating from a technological hazard:

- *Disaster:* A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability and capacity, leading to one or more of the following: human, material, economic and environmental losses and impacts.
- *Slow-onset disaster:* A slow-onset disaster is defined as one that emerges gradually over time. Slow-onset disasters could be associated with, e.g., drought, desertification, sea-level rise, epidemic disease.

Sources:

- United Nations, 2015. Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, para 19(g): <https://sdgs.un.org/publications/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030-17988>
- United Nations, 2016. A/71/644. Report of the open-ended intergovernmental expert working group on indicators and terminology relating to disaster risk reduction. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N16/410/23/PDF/N1641023.pdf>
- Senathirajah, K., Bonner, M., Schuyler, Q., & Palanisami, T. (2023). A disaster risk reduction framework for the new global instrument to end plastic pollution. *Journal of Hazardous Materials*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhazmat.2023.131020>

3. Additional considerations

Provide any other relevant inputs, proposals or priorities here that have not been discussed at INC-2 (e.g. preamble; institutional arrangements, including governing body, subsidiary bodies, scientific and technical cooperation and coordination, and secretariat; final provisions including dispute settlements; and if appropriate annexes).

Proposed input to preamble:

Reaffirm the global commitments to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Explanatory Text:

Operative paragraph 3(k) of UNEP/EA.5/Res.14 determines that the international legally binding instrument shall “promote cooperation and coordination with relevant regional and international conventions, instruments and organizations, while recognizing their respective mandates, avoiding duplication and promoting complementarity of action”. In this sense, ensuring that the new treaty is aligned with the Sendai Framework, particularly considering it addresses biological and technological disasters, is key to avoid duplications or contradictions. The Sendai Framework also highlights the need for coherence between the sustainable development, climate change and disaster risk reduction agendas.

Source:

- Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, para 19(h): <https://sdgs.un.org/publications/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030-17988>
- UNEA Resolution 5/14 “End plastic pollution: Towards an international legally binding instrument”: https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/39812/OEWG_PP_1_INF_1_UNEA%20resolution.pdf