



## Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Tenth Meeting of the Working Group on Reduction of Pressures from the Baltic Sea Catchment Area

PRESSURE 10-2019

Tallinn, Estonia, 9-12 April 2019

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### Background

This document summarises information on ongoing European and global processes with regard to marine litter since PRESSURE 9-2018, which may contribute to the implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter. The Action Plan to address marine plastic litter from ships, adopted by MEPC on 26 October 2018 (Resolution MEPC.310(73)), is contained in the attachment to this document (separate file [3-11-Att.](#); 63 pages).

### Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information and make use of it for the implementation of the RAP ML.

Countries may also wish to provide additional information on relevant activities.

## Ongoing European and global processes with regard to marine litter

### Global processes

#### In the frame of the International Maritime Organisation

In the frame of the International Maritime Organisation, the 3rd meeting of the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) (MEPC 73) held on 22-26 October 2018 (London, UK) had a dedicated agenda item to the development of an action plan to address marine plastic litter from ships (agenda item 8). The **Action Plan to Address Marine Plastic Litter from Ships** was adopted as Resolution MEPC.310(73) (included as **Attachment, 3-11-Att.**).

It is to point out that the Action Plan is very opened in the sense that actions to be developed refer to “consider”, “encourage”, and “further investigate” different issues and that the Action Plan applies to all ships, including fishing vessels.

The upcoming meeting of the MEPC (MEPC 74, to be held on 22-26 October 2018 in London, UK will have a dedicated agenda item to the follow-up work emanating from the Action Plan to address marine plastic litter from ships (agenda item 8) and it is also envisaged to establish a Working Group on Marine Plastic Litter. The following documents have already been submitted to the meeting for consideration:

- Report of the Correspondence Group on Marine Plastic Litter from Ships (MEPC 74-8 by The United Kingdom);
- Input by the LC/LP governing bodies on the IMO Action plan to address marine plastic litter from ships (MEPC 74/8/1 by the Secretariat);
- Proposal to consider the adoption of an IMO strategy to address marine plastic litter from ships (MEPC 74/8/2 by the United Arab Emirates and Vanuatu);
- **Proposal to extend the reporting requirement in regulation 10.6 of MARPOL Annex V to include reporting data on discharge or accidental loss of fishing gear by the flag State to IMO via GISIS** (MEPC 74/8/3 by Vanuatu);

**It will be important to follow up on these proposals in relation to their implications to related actions in the RAP on RS2 of the RAP ML on the development of best practice in relation to inspections for MARPOL Annex V and in connection with actions RS6, RS7, RS10, RS11 and RS12 of the RAP ML addressing abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear (ALDFG).**

#### In the frame of the United Nations

##### *Invitation to share actions and activities related to the implementation of UN resolutions on marine litter and microplastics*

The third session of the UN Environment Assembly, in Resolution UN.EA/3/7 on Marine litter and microplastics, stressed the importance of long-term elimination of discharge of litter and microplastics to the oceans and of avoiding detriment to marine ecosystems and the human activities dependent on them from marine litter and microplastics. It also urged all actors to step up actions to “by 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution” and requested the Executive Director to:

- Compile voluntary commitments, as applicable, targeting marine litter and microplastics; to provide an overview of their scope in support of the work of the United Nations Environment Assembly on that issue; to better understand progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal target 14.1; and to report to the United Nations Environment Assembly at its fourth session on the matter (Operative Paragraph 9);
- Report to the United Nations Environment Assembly at its fourth session on the implementation of its resolutions 1/6 and 2/11 and the present resolution (Operative Paragraph 11).

The HELCOM Secretariat received an invitation to share, on a voluntary basis, actions and activities related to:

- Implementation of United Nations Environmental Assembly (UNEA) resolutions [1/6](#), [2/11](#) and [3/7](#) on marine litter and microplastics.
- Share information on Voluntary Commitments on Marine Litter and Microplastics that have been made outside of the UN Framework and Conferences and has therefore not been captured during the [third session of the UN Environment Assembly, Sustainable Development Goals conference in New York](#) and [Oceans Conference](#).
- Share information on ongoing work related to elements included in the [report of the first meeting of the Ad hoc Open-ended expert group](#).

The reporting platform provided for the purpose of voluntary reporting was used to provide a summary of HELCOM activities on marine litter. Based on the input provided by all stakeholders involved in the process, a report on the "Analysis of voluntary commitments targeting marine litter and microplastics pursuant to resolution 3/7" was submitted to UNEA-4 as a working document ([UNEP/EA.4/11](#)).

#### *Fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly*

HELCOM participated in the [Fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly \(UNEA-4\)](#) that took place in Nairobi, Kenya from 11 to 15 March 2019, where it particularly contributed in advancing the debate on marine litter, microplastics and ocean-literacy.

UNEA-4 saw the launch of the [UN guidelines for monitoring marine litter and microplastics](#) by [GESAMP](#), a group of scientific experts that provides advice to the UN on marine environmental protection. Staff from the HELCOM Secretariat were involved in the development of the guidelines which contain several references to HELCOM work on marine litter.

At UNEA-4's [Regional seas round table](#), HELCOM also shared its experiences on drafting and implementing the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter. During the event, focus was also placed on single use plastic items, as well as the need to address, together with the fishing sector, the issue of ALDFG.

"HELCOM, like its [regional seas] sister organizations around the world, are a bridge between the global commitments and the national action in each of the regional seas we manage" said Monika Stankiewicz in her [statement at UNEA-4](#). "Our cooperation under UN Environment and its Regional Seas Programme creates a unique opportunity to advance the implementation of the global commitments."

Under the twin theme of "Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production", UNEA-4 took a critical look at our consumption patterns.

"For all the progress inspired by the Global Goals, one barrier impedes them all: the choices we make in our everyday lives continue to fuel consumption and production habits that are increasingly extending beyond the limits of our planet," said H.E. Siim Kiisler, President of the 2019 UN Environment Assembly and current Minister of the Environment of Estonia.

The sixth [Global Environment Outlook](#), UN Environment's flagship report on the overall state of our environment and how it affects our social and economic status, was also presented to the public during UNEA-4.

**The following resolutions addressing marine litter either directly or through their generation pathways were adopted during UNEA-4:**

- Innovative Pathways to Achieve Sustainable Consumption and Production ([UNEP/EA.4/L.2](#));
- Promoting sustainable practices and innovative solutions for curbing food loss and waste ([UNEP/EA.4/L.3](#));
- Marine plastic litter and microplastics ([UNEP/EA.4/L.7](#));
- Environmentally sound management of waste ([UNEP/EA.4/L.8](#));

- Sound management of chemicals and waste ([UNEP/EA.4/L.9](#));
- Addressing Single-use Plastic Products Pollution ([UNEP/EA.4/L.10](#));
- Protection of the marine environment from land-based activities ([UNEP/EA.4/L.12](#));
- Implementation Plan “Towards a Pollution-free Planet” ([UNEP/EA.4/L.25](#));

Finally, the 2019 Ministerial Declaration “Innovative Solutions for Environmental Challenges And Sustainable Consumption And Production” ([UNEP/EA.4/L.1](#)) summarises the views of the Assembly.

The fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly will be held on 22-26 February 2021 in Nairobi, Kenya.

In the frame of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)

[ICES Working Group on Marine Litter](#) (WGML) held its first meeting on 23–27 April 2018, in Copenhagen, Denmark. The interim report of the meeting can be found [here](#).

The WGML addresses scientific questions relating to marine litter and microplastic monitoring, assessment and research. **The group develops guidance on seafloor litter and microplastic monitoring and assessment to support the data needs of our member countries and the wider science and assessment community internationally.**

The group is working towards a proposal on a seafloor litter and microplastics research and monitoring strategy for ICES, in conjunction with member countries, a range of regional organisations and the ICES Data Centre. Their work will advance our understanding of the prevalence and impacts of marine litter and microplastics.

The Terms of Reference for the WGML, which include the provision of a final report by 31 May 2020 to the Science Committee (SCICOM), can be found [here](#).

The Working Group is chaired by Thomas Maes (UK), Francois Galgani (France) and Andy Booth (Norway). **Among participants in the Group there are representatives from Denmark, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden from HELCOM countries.**

**It will be important to follow up on the process of this Group and to ensure that the EN-Marine Litter is fully aware of them, since representatives in the network are not necessarily the same as those participating in the WGML.**

Regional processes: XX Anniversary International Environmental Forum, Baltic Sea Day (21-22 March 2019, Saint-Petersburg, Russia)

A dedicated [round table on marine litter](#) was held as part of the [Baltic Sea Day 2019](#). Topics under discussion were: (i) the current status on implementation and suggestions to facilitate implementation of the actions on microplastics in the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter; (ii) abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG); and (iii) Regional beach Cleaning activities.

## EU processes

Proposal for an EU Directive on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment

Following the adoption of the Strategy for Plastics ([Strategy](#) and [Annexes](#)) in January 2018 by the European Commission, the [proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment](#) aims to fulfil the commitment by the European Commission to look into further action to address plastic marine litter that builds on the piecemeal efforts underway in EU Member States. **The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union reached**

**a provisional political agreement on the proposal on 19 December 2018.** Once adopted the proposal shall apply to single-use plastic (SUP) products listed in the [Annex](#) to the proposal and to fishing gear containing plastic.

21<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Working Group on Good Environmental Status (WG GES) & presentation of DG ENV funded projects under “DG ENV/MSFD Second Cycle” call (18-20 March 2019, Brussels, Belgium)

Following the kind invitation from DG ENV, HELCOM staff presented the outcomes of the Theme 2 on marine litter as part of the EU co-funded project SPICE concluded in 2017.

[REACH<sup>1</sup> restriction proposal for intentionally added microplastics](#)

On 30 Jan 2019, the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) published its official [REACH restriction proposal for intentionally added microplastics](#). The report outlines a proposal to restrict the placing on the market of polymers (as defined by Article 3(5) of REACH) as a substance or in a mixture in a concentration equal to or greater than 0.01% w/w when present in a physical form consistent with a ‘microplastic’. Microplastics are solid-polymer containing particles, to which additives or other substances may have been added, and where  $\geq 1\%$  w/w of particles have (i) all dimensions  $1\text{nm} \leq x \leq 5\text{mm}$ , or (ii), for fibres, a length of  $3\text{nm} \leq x \leq 15\text{mm}$  and length to diameter ratio of  $>3$ . Microplastics have diverse applications, including in agriculture, horticulture, cosmetic products, paints, coatings, detergents, maintenance products, medical and pharmaceutical applications. Derogations are proposed for polymers that occur in nature, polymers that meet criteria for minimum (bio)degradability, uses of microplastics at industrial sites as well as certain uses by consumers or professionals that would not inevitably lead to a release of microplastics to the environment. Certain derogated uses are accompanied with requirements to provide additional information on packaging or safety datasheets and to report certain information annually to ECHA. The proposal includes transitional arrangements for specific applications, such that the restriction enters into effect progressively over a period of six years after entry into force. Uses of ‘microbeads’ (microplastics used as an abrasive) would be prohibited immediately after the entry into force of the restriction.

This proposed restriction is currently opened to public consultation (from 20 March to 20 September 2019).

[FanPLESStic-Sea and the European Chemicals Agency \(ECHA\)](#)

As part of the EU INTERREG Baltic Sea Region project FanPLESStic-sea, Finnish partners in the project have contacted the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) based in Helsinki to invite them to present their work related to microplastics in the upcoming project meeting to be held on 26 – 27 September 2019, in Helsinki, Finland.

**This would be a very good opportunity to better understand the implications of the REACH restriction proposal for intentionally added microplastics.**

[Upcoming relevant meetings](#)

The table below presents available information on relevant upcoming meetings on marine litter at EU and global level.

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| 4 April 2019<br>Sofia (Bulgaria)       | International High-level Conference Inter-basin Cooperation on Marine Litter: a focus on the Danube River and the Black Sea |
| 8-12 April 2019<br>Copenhagen, Denmark | OSPAR EIHA Committee  |

<sup>1</sup> REACH stands for Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals. It entered into force on 1 June 2007 and it is a regulation of the EU, adopted to improve the protection of human health and the environment from the risks that can be posed by chemicals, while enhancing the competitiveness of the EU chemicals industry. It also promotes alternative methods for the hazard assessment of substances in order to reduce the number of tests on animals.

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| 5-6 May<br>Metz, France                   | Workshop on the G7 Action Plan to Combat Marine Litter in synergy with the Regional Seas Conventions |
| [31 May 2019],<br>[Vancouver, Canada]     | Second meeting of the ICES Working Group on Marine Litter (WGML)                                     |
| 26-28 June 2019,<br>Gothenburg, Sweden    | EU Technical Group on Marine Litter Annual Meeting 2019  |
| 5-6 June 2019<br>Paris, French            | OSPAR Workshop on Riverine Litter  |
| 12-13 June 2019<br>Reykjavik, Iceland     | OSPAR ICG-ML (Intersessional Correspondence Group on Marine Litter)                                  |
| 26-28 June 2019<br>Gothenburg, Sweden     | EU Technical Group on Marine Litter Annual Meeting 2019  |
| 26-27 September 2019<br>Helsinki, Finland | FanLESStic-sea project meeting   |