



Workshop summary

IASS online workshop on 'combating marine plastic pollution: possible roles and contributions of regional instruments in strengthening global governance'

Date: 9th of October 2020

Time: 09:00 – 11:30 CET

Hosts: Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS) - Nicole Wienrich, Sebastian Unger, Laura Weiland

Contents

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Introduction..... | 2 |
| 2 | Presentations and discussion | 2 |
| 3 | Key messages from the break-out sessions..... | 4 |
| | Break out group 1: Addressing land and sea-based sources of pollution | 4 |
| | Break out group 2: Monitoring, reporting and informing policy | 4 |
| | Break out group 3: Cooperation, coordination and partnerships | 5 |
| 4 | Key messages from plenary discussion | 5 |
| | Annex 1. Links shared by participants | 6 |
| | Annex 2. Agenda..... | 6 |
| | Annex 3. Participants list..... | 7 |

1 Introduction

The aim of the online workshop was to discuss the opportunities and challenges of regional initiatives and instruments in combatting marine plastic litter and their possible roles and contributions as part of a strengthened international framework including a potential future global agreement to combat marine plastic litter.

The workshop built on preliminary research results of the IASS, including the outcomes of an online survey in which key actors affiliated with regional instruments such as Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, Regional Fisheries Bodies, Large Marine Ecosystems, and Regional Economic Organisations provided on-the-ground perspectives of the challenges and opportunities they face in combatting marine plastic litter.

Key issues discussed at the workshop included:

- sources of pollution (land-based and sea-based),
- monitoring, reporting, and informing policy
- cooperation, coordination and partnerships.

The results of the online workshop will be incorporated into a research report, which will contribute to informing international discussions and efforts, including the work of the UNEA and its Ad Hoc Open-Ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics (AHEG). This research is supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Climate and Environment and led by the Institute for Advances Sustainability Studies (IASS) in Potsdam, Germany.

2 Presentations and discussion

1. **Ingeborg Mork-Knutzen (Ministry of Climate and Environment, Norway)** provided introductory remarks, explaining that although there is incomplete information of sources and impacts of marine plastic litter, there is enough knowledge to take action. In 2014, the UN assembly recognised the urgency of marine plastic litter and that it required increased attention from the global community. A report by UNEP showed the gaps in governance structures, which led to the implementation of the Ad Hoc Open-Ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics (AHEG). UNEA-2 recognised the need for a new global structure and UNEA-5 provides a platform to continue dialogue on a future global agreement. The Nordic countries have been strong supporters of global action and commissioned a Nordic report series to assess how such a new global agreement could look like and what the role of the regional level may be. The series will also investigate financial mechanisms and the science-policy interface.
2. **Nicole Wienrich (Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies - IASS)** presented the preliminary results of an analysis the IASS is conducting regarding opportunities and challenges of regional initiatives and instruments in combatting marine plastic litter as well as their possible roles and contributions as part of a strengthened international framework including a potential future global agreement. For a detailed analysis, it was encouraged to view the final report which is due in December 2020. The analysis builds on peer-reviewed and grey literature and is further substantiated with survey results as well as the discussions of the online workshop. The survey was conducted in July 2020 amongst representatives of Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, Regional Fisheries Bodies, Regional Economic Organisations and Large Marine Ecosystem activities.

3. The survey results indicated that most regional instruments perceived their efforts to curb marine plastic litter as mostly successful but that certain aspects could be improved, including the engagement of the private sector and monitoring programs. The regional instruments indicated that coordination and cooperation, such as with national administrations and other sectors, was highly important but the actual level of engagement could be enhanced. The majority of the survey participants believed that a new global agreement would be beneficial to their work in combatting marine plastic litter at the regional level.
4. Lastly, the presentation described ways in which the regional level could support the global level and vice versa. It was concluded that the global level could harmonise efforts, for example by: Establishing common objectives and principles; providing a global platform for coordination and cooperation; creating common procedures for monitoring and reporting; harmonizing implementation efforts across regions; providing financial support and capacity building and lastly, setting minimum standards. The potential role of the regional level vis a vis the global level could include: providing a regional platform for coordination and cooperation; establishing regional monitoring and reporting system; providing a knowledge base about the region; and identifying regional research needs. The presentation concluded with initial recommendations on how the regional level could be strengthened.
5. Workshop participants commented on the presentation, enquiring if river commissions, MARPOL Annex V, or the London Convention were taken into consideration in the research. It was replied that although these were (partly) acknowledged, they are not the focus of the analysis. One workshop participant mentioned that the presented results and recommendation closely align with the EU recommendations.
6. **Karen Raubenheimer (Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security (ANCORS), University of Wollongong)** presented on the possible core elements of a global agreement to prevent plastic pollution. The presentation provided insight on how a global agreement might stimulate long-term prevention of plastic pollution at the national level. The research originated from an increase in calls for the development of a global agreement to more effectively and comprehensively deal with marine plastic litter and microplastics. This led to the preparation of a Nordic Report to sketch out possible elements of a new global agreement to address the lifecycle of plastics. During the presentation, global governance gaps of marine litter were illustrated, including: management (lack of globally binding standards and design of products), coordination (lack of institution with a mandate to coordinate efforts across multiple agreements), and assessment gaps (global standards for monitoring and reporting, lack of data). Strategic goals to address the life cycle of marine plastic litter were introduced, including: elimination of problematic and avoidable plastic products, the sustainable management of all products, sustainable waste management, and chemical hazard reduction. This would require core global commitments for the development of: National Plastics Management Plans (NPMPs), International Sustainability Criteria, and National Plastics Sustainability Standards (regulatory and market-based instruments) through cooperation between the global and national level.
7. During the discussion following this presentation, participants asked how the global agreement could forge the link with current regional initiatives. It was commented that waste management could gain financial and resource support and that market-based instruments could help change the design of products. Participants also pointed out that financial schemes could create unintentional consequences by benefiting wealthy waste industry players and that engaging with such players from a bottom-up approach could be helpful to address this. It was reminded that the global agreement should complement existing efforts (e.g. not create a duplication of work conducted under the Basel Convention) and rather fill gaps, such as on plastic product design.

3 Key messages from the break-out sessions

Break out group 1: Addressing land and sea-based sources of pollution

Questions in focus:

- Which issues do you encounter when aiming to address the sea-based/land-based sources of marine litter in your region? How could a global agreement/treaty help to tackle these issues?
- Which additional measures/initiatives could you envision to implement in order to address the sea-based/land-based sources of marine litter in your region? How could a global agreement/treaty facilitate/promote these additional measures/initiatives?

Key messages:

- The transboundary nature of marine plastics litter requires concerted efforts from all countries and regions. Independent action will have limited impacts.
- The global agreement can provide overall framework and umbrella tools but it is also important to set milestones.
- There are large discrepancies in regional resources, capacities, knowledge and financial capital, but also in how regions are impacted. For example, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) produce the least waste but are disproportionately affected by marine plastic litter and most vulnerable to the consequences.
- Regional Fisheries Bodies face challenges regarding ALDFG. Especially small-scale vessels are difficult to monitor for compliance. Improvements have been seen through locally based initiatives with bottom-up approaches led by regional/international agreements.
- The global level can support the development of national inventories, national plastic pollution elimination plans including targets, and regional plans and targets.
- The private sector needs to be involved in a meaningful way.

Break out group 2: Monitoring, reporting and informing policy

Questions in focus:

- What challenges regarding regional level monitoring and reporting do you encounter?
- How could a global agreement help to improve monitoring and reporting?

Key messages:

- Need to clearly determine which analysis/data is needed for what purpose.
- Public sharing of certain sensitive information might be a challenge (e.g. vessel locations in relation to loss and retrieval of ALDFG).
- Harmonization of monitoring and reporting schemes is very important.
- Building global consensus on monitoring and reporting schemes is challenging. National/ regional concepts within a global framework make more sense. On a global scale, there cannot be very detailed prescriptions but a framework could provide pointers and guidance for the regional and national level.

- A bottom-up approach to actual marine litter monitoring systems might be better suited to ensure that regional characteristics are taken into account (e.g. capacities and specific regional challenges/footprint).

Break out group 3: Cooperation, coordination and partnerships

Questions in focus:

- How could a global agreement promote enhanced cooperation, coordination and partnerships to prevent marine pollution?
- What could be lessons learned from global action plans/conventions which are already being implemented at the regional scale?

Key messages:

- Key tools and approaches for regional integration have been developed and are available, but they need to be implemented and strengthened.
- Well-designed science-policy interfaces are characterised by their ability to turn data and assessments into transformative action that are linked to the relevant level of action – local, national, regional, global.
- Greater integration of financing instruments is needed, both at the global and regional as well as national level. Although there are examples of fostering the integration of industry and private actors, more binding standards and obligations would be beneficial.

4 Key messages from plenary discussion

- Participants commented that upstream sources are bringing the plastics into the marine environment so land-based organisations/actors need to be involved in the discussions (source to sea; freshwater, land/coastal and marine; upstream/downstream issue).
- Regional seas programmes and river basins commissions need to collaborate (need integration between freshwater, land/coastal and marine). This requires a concerted, cross-sectoral collaborative approach where responsibility is shared. The global agreement should address the gaps between the up-stream and down-stream level.
- As marine plastic pollution is a public health concern and responsibility, society must be taken into account (science-policy-society interface). Seafood safety can also provide justification for action to combat marine plastic litter.
- Participants commented that there is a variety of different monitoring schemes with varying standards of quality control and assessments (if in place at all). We should be asking: How can such data be made accessible? Which information is really needed at the regional and global level? What do we really need to know to sharpen our measures?
- Regularity of reporting is important and although regions are very diverse in their approaches, minimum standards should be implemented and need to remain comparable such as through a common implementation framework.
- The global agreement should go beyond harmonisation and include capacity building and funding pathways that are inclusive and unbiased. It should also address topics such as plastics product design, liability and compensation.
- Industry partnerships are key at the regional level but a new global agreement can also be a suitable approach to move away from soft standards towards binding elements that regional actors can draw upon.

Annex 1. Links shared by participants

- 2019 Marine Regions Forum: <https://www.prog-ocean.org/marine-regions-forum/>
- Action Platform for Source-to-Sea Management: <https://www.siwi.org/what-we-do/source-to-sea/>
- Open letter calling for specific actions: <https://www.siwi.org/latest/open-letter-calls-for-urgent-action-to-protect-the-worlds-oceans/>
- Action brief on the need for upstream action to meeting SDG 14: <https://www.siwi.org/publications/starting-at-the-source-to-save-the-sea-look-upstream-to-achieve-sdg14/>
- Guidelines for the Monitoring and Assessment of Plastic Litter in the Ocean: <http://www.gesamp.org/publications/guidelines-for-the-monitoring-and-assessment-of-plastic-litter-in-the-ocean>
- Gap analysis of the current legislation, policies and plan in Pacific Islands Countries: <https://reports.eia-international.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2020/09/Plastic-Prevention-Gap-Analysis-2020.pdf>.
- An argument for New Zealand to support a global plastic pollution agreement: <https://ojs.victoria.ac.nz/pg/article/view/6484>
- EIA's Convention on Plastic Pollution: Towards a new global agreement to address plastic pollution: <https://eia-international.org/wp-content/uploads/EIA-report-Convention-on-Plastic-Pollution-spreads.pdf>
- GESAMP WG43 report on sea-based sources of marine litter – a review of current knowledge and assessment of data gaps: <http://www.fao.org/3/cb0724en/cb0724en.pdf>
- UN Habitat on urban waste: <https://unhabitat.org/waste-wise-cities>

Annex 2. Agenda

| Time | Agenda point |
|-----------------|--|
| 09:00-09:10 CET | Welcome Sebastian Unger (Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS)) |
| 09:10-09:15 CET | Introductory remarks Ingeborg Mork-Knutsen (Ministry of Climate and Environment, Norway) |
| 09:15-09:30 CET | Preliminary research results Nicole Wienrich (Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS)) |
| 09:30-09:45 CET | Possible core elements of global agreement to prevent plastic pollution Karen Raubenheimer (Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security (ANCORS), University of Wollongong) |
| 09:45-09:50 CET | Short break |
| 09:50-10:35 CET | Break-out groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group 1: Addressing land and sea-based sources of pollution • Group 2: Monitoring, reporting and informing policy • Group 3: Cooperation, coordination and partnerships |
| 10:35-10:50 CET | Break |
| 10:50-11:20 CET | Plenary discussion 'A global agreement on marine litter- What role for regions?' moderated by Sebastian Unger (Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS)) |
| 11:20-11:30 CET | Wrap up and closing Sebastian Unger (Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS)) |

Annex 3. Participants list

| Name | Organisation | Break out group |
|-------------------------------|--|-----------------|
| Trisia Farrelly | Massey University | 1 |
| Thandiwe Gxaba | Benguela Current Commission | 1 |
| Ricardo Federizon | Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization | 1 |
| Natalie Harms | Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia | 1 |
| Michail Papadoyannakis | European Union | 1 |
| Lauren Nelson | Indian Ocean Tuna Commission | 1 |
| Karen Raubenheimer | University of Wollongong | 1 |
| Christos Ioakeimidis | United Nations Environment Programme / Mediterranean Action Plan | 1 |
| Andy Booth | SINTEF | 1 |
| Amparo Perez Roda | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations | 1 |
| Tunehafo GOTTLIEB | Benguela Current Commission | 2 |
| Thomas Maes | GRID-Arendal | 2 |
| Sivaji Patra | South Asian Cooperative Environment Programme | 2 |
| Philip Stamp | Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic | 2 |
| Per Olof Busch | Adelphi | 2 |
| Nathan G. Taylor | International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas | 2 |
| Lizette Voges | South East Atlantic Fisheries Organisation | 2 |
| Isara Chanrachkij | Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center | 2 |
| Conrad Sparks | Cape Peninsula University of Technology | 2 |
| Yegor Volovik | Northwest Pacific Action Plan | 3 |
| Vladimir Radchenko | North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission | 3 |
| Viviane Kinyaga | Benguela Current Commission | 3 |
| Tatjana Hema | United Nations Environment Programme / Mediterranean Action Plan | 3 |
| Stefanie Werner | German Environment Agency | 3 |
| Ruth Matthews | Stockholm International Water Institute | 3 |
| Rudolf Hermes | Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem Project | 3 |
| Omar Siddique | United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific | 3 |
| Nils Simon | Adelphi | 3 |
| Jörn Schmidt | International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, Science Committee | 3 |
| Heidi Savelli | United Nations Environment Programme, Regional Seas Programme | 3 |
| Dixon Wairunge | Nairobi Convention | 3 |
| Kirsten Jacobsen | Ministry of Climate and Environment, Norway | / |
| Ingeborg Mork-Knutsen | Ministry of Climate and Environment, Norway | / |