

Strengthening Regional Ocean Governance and Partnerships towards 'Clean Seas'

14:00-15:30, Friday, 8 September 2017
Conference Room 2, United Nations Conference Centre
Bangkok, Thailand

Background

There is growing recognition of the urgent need to address marine pollution including marine litter, which is not only impacting the coastal and marine environment but also has serious social and economic implications. It is estimated that 10 to 20 million tonnes of plastic are finding their way into the world's oceans each year, costing approximately US\$13 billion per year in environmental damage to marine ecosystems, including financial losses incurred by fisheries, tourism and beach clean ups¹. It is estimated that global plastic production has increased by 8.7% per year on average over 1950-2012² and that ocean plastics cost the tourism, fishing and shipping industries in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) region alone US\$1.3bn a year³. In a business-as-usual scenario, the ocean is expected to contain more plastics than fish (by weight) by 2025⁴. Countries in Asia and the Pacific are major sources of marine pollution, including marine plastic litter, and also highly vulnerable to its impacts. Strengthening regional ocean governance and partnerships is essential in addressing these issues effectively.

The outcome of the UN Ocean Conference held in June 2017, "*Our Ocean, Our Future: Call for Action*" highlights the need for urgent actions to strengthen sustainable ocean-based economies and to enhance cooperation and coordination among institutions at all levels, including international organizations, regional and sub-regional organizations and institutions, arrangements and programmes. It also emphasizes the need for strengthened partnerships, including public-private partnerships, by enhancing engagement of governments with global, regional and sub-regional bodies and programmes, the private sector other relevant actors in efforts towards conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. UN Environment Assembly resolution 2/11 on marine plastic litter and micro-plastics specifically recognizes marine plastic litter and microplastics as a global priority requiring global, regional and local solutions.

The Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities is the only global intergovernmental programme addressing marine pollution arising from land, and as such key to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 14, Target 1. UN Environment Assembly resolution 2/10 on oceans and seas invited Member States and Regional Seas programmes, in cooperation with other relevant organizations, to work towards the implementation of, and reporting on, the different ocean-related Sustainable Development Goals and associated targets. Regional mechanisms, including the Regional Seas programmes have been crucial players in addressing marine litter and microplastics. In Asia and the Pacific, both the Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP) and the Coordination Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) have developed regional action plans on marine litter. The South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) are developing regional action plans on marine litter, and SPREP and the International Maritime Organisation are implementing the the *Pacific Oceans Pollution Prevention Programme (PACPOL) 2014-2020*.

Taking a regional approach for SDG implementation through existing governance mechanisms can facilitate country implementation and contribute to the harmonization of country actions targeting specific marine ecosystems. The SDG 14 roundtable held in March 2017 at the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP), called for strengthening the capacities and effectiveness of existing regional ocean governance mechanisms, including the Regional Seas programmes. Building on the outcomes of the UN Ocean Conference, this special event held during the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Summit on the Environment will focus on highlighting key initiatives

¹ "Valuing Plastics: The Business Case for Measuring, Managing and Disclosing Plastic Use in the Consumer Goods Industry" (UN Environment, 2014): <http://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/9238>

² Ibid.

³ "Understanding the Economic Benefits and Costs of Controlling Marine Debris in the APEC Region" (APEC Marine Resources Conservation Working Group 2009): http://publications.apec.org/publication-detail.php?pub_id=164

⁴ "The New Plastics Economy: Rethinking the future of plastics" (Ellen McArthur Foundation, 2016): <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/publications/the-new-plastics-economy-rethinking-the-future-of-plastics>

in the Asia-Pacific region that contribute to strengthening regional ocean governance and promoting partnerships among stakeholders in addressing marine pollution and in particular marine plastic litter. The event will provide opportunities to discuss remaining challenges, underlying causes and obstacles to moving forward, and based on this consider concrete steps that can be taken to strengthen regional ocean governance and partnerships in addressing issues related to marine pollution, particularly marine litter, more effectively. Furthermore, the special event will support discussions in the lead-up to the third session of the UN Environment Assembly, 4-6 December 2017, where the overarching theme is “*Pollution*”. Strong commitments and ambitious action by Asian and Pacific countries on land-based pollution and in particular marine litter is of great importance in addressing marine pollution globally.

Programme

Moderator: Ms. Lisa Svensson, Chief, Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Branch, UN Environment

Opening	
Welcome remarks (5 min.)	Ms. Shamshad Akhtar, Executive Secretary, UN ESCAP
Welcome remarks (5 min.)	Ms. Dechen Tsering, Regional Director and Representative for Asia and the Pacific, UN Environment
A short video on the Clean Seas campaign (3 min.) by UN Environment	
Statement by Youth representative (5 min): perspectives on grassroots contributions to combatting plastic waste to preserve healthy marine environments for young and future generations (Melati and Isabel Wijsen, Founders of Bye Bye Plastic Bags).	
Panel discussion: Strengthening Regional Ocean Governance and Partnerships to address marine litter	
Keynote address (10 min): perspectives on regional intergovernmental cooperation in implementing global commitments on marine litter	HE Ms. Lorna Eden, Assistant Minister for Local Government, Housing and Environment, Fiji
Introduction to panel discussion (5 min.): overview of context including outcomes of the UN Ocean Conference; the upcoming UNEA-3; objectives of the special event	Ms. Lisa Svensson, Chief, Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Branch, UN Environment
Panelists: (5 min. initial interventions by each panelist)	
Perspectives on the role of regional intergovernmental mechanisms, such as the Regional Seas programmes, in addressing marine litter at national level	HE Mr. Masagos Zulkifli, Minister of the Environment and Water Resources, Singapore
Regional ocean governance processes and policy instruments to address marine litter – experiences from the Regional Seas Programme	Mr. Lev Neretin, Senior Coordinator, North West Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP)
Leveraging cross-sectoral efforts towards addressing marine litter: Integrated policy frameworks to reduce pollution and promote eco-tourism and sustainable marine resource use.	HE Mr. Abdullah Ziyad, Minister of State for Environment and Energy, Ministry of Environment and Energy, Maldives
Private sector leadership, innovation, and successful examples of Public-Private Partnerships in addressing marine litter	Mr. Lars Svensson, Sustainability and Communication Director, IKEA Southeast Asia
Moderated discussion with interventions/questions from the floor	
Closing	
Closing remarks (5 min.)	Session Moderator