



Global Partnership on Marine Litter

...preventing our oceans from becoming dumps

Background

The Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML) launched during the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio + 20 in June 2012, is a voluntary open-ended partnership for international agencies, Governments, businesses, academia, local authorities, nongovernmental organizations and individuals.

The Third Intergovernmental Review of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities was convened 25-26 January 2012. Here, 64 Governments and the European Commission recommended the establishment of a global partnership on marine litter. At the launch, key stakeholders working in the field of marine litter/debris discussed how to coordinate their activities and pool resources to develop and implement a concrete international partnership, which advances, *inter alia*, the Honolulu Strategy. At the conclusion, a number of statements of support for the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML) were made, including from the Governments of the Netherlands and the USA, as well as from FAO, IMO, UNEP/IETC, the Natural Resources Foundation (NRDC), and the Plastics Pollution Coalition.

This launch complemented paragraph 163 of the Rio Outcome document "The Future We Want" which, *inter alia*, noted with concern that the health of oceans and marine biodiversity are negatively affected by marine pollution, including marine debris, especially plastic and committed to take action to reduce the incidence and impacts of such pollution on marine ecosystems, including through the... follow up of the relevant initiatives such as the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA), as well as the adoption of coordinated strategies to this end. Paragraph 163 further committed to take action to, by 2025, based on collected scientific data, achieve significant reductions in marine debris to prevent harm to the coastal and marine environment.

Objectives

Besides being supportive of the Global Partnership on Waste Management, the GPML seeks to protect human health and the global environment by the reduction and management of marine litter as its main goal, through several specific objectives:

- a. To reduce the impacts of marine litter worldwide on economies, ecosystems, animal welfare and human health.
- b. To enhance international cooperation and coordination through the promotion and implementation of the Honolulu Strategy - a global framework for the prevention and management of marine debris, as well as the Honolulu Commitment - a multi-stakeholder pledge.
- c. To promote knowledge management, information sharing and monitoring of progress on the implementation of the Honolulu Strategy.
- d. To promote resource efficiency and economic development through waste prevention (e.g. 4Rs (reduce, re-use, recycle and re-design) and by recovering valuable material and/or energy from waste.
- e. Increase awareness on sources of marine litter, their fate and impacts.
- f. To assess emerging issues related to the fate and potential influence of marine litter, including (micro) plastics uptake in the food web and associated transfer of pollutants, and conservation and welfare of marine fauna.

The United Nations Environment Programme provides the Secretariat for the GPML in line with the mandate received in the "Manila Declaration on Furthering the Implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities".

How does it work?

The GPML is guided by the 'Honolulu Strategy – a global framework for prevention and management of marine debris' and works as a "coordinating forum" for all stakeholders working in the area of marine litter prevention and management, thereby assisting stakeholders to complement each other's efforts, to avoid duplication and to optimize the efficiency and efficacy of their resources.

The current focal areas are:

- Goal A: Reduced levels and impacts of land-based litter and solid waste introduced into the aquatic environment;
- Goal B: Reduced levels and impact of seabased sources of marine debris including solid waste, lost cargo, ALDFG, and abandoned vessels introduced into the aquatic environment;
- Goal C: Reduced levels and impacts of (accumulated) marine debris on shorelines, aquatic habitats, and biodiversity.

Other focal areas may be added in future. UNEP/GPA has agreed to take the lead on Focal area A related to Land-based Sources of marine litter. Focal Area B related to Sea-based Sources of marine litter is led by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO is focusing on Abandoned, Lost or Otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear).

What's next?

The first partnership forum for the GPML was held during the Second Global Conference on Land-Ocean Connections (GLOC-2), 2-4 October, 2013, Montego Bay, Jamaica. At this forum, partnership documentation such as framework document was discussed and the initial Steering Committee established. Focal area workplans were presented and discussed and priority activities identified. Acknowledging the importance of bringing the GPML to regional and national level, the secretariat will continue to use regional marine litter related meetings to promote the partnership and the online network, seek feedback on the further development of the GPML while catalysing the development of regional networks. The steering committee will be the governing body of the GPML and comprise core GPML participants to provide guidance, review the overall work plan of the GPML and the progress made.

A resolution on marine plastic debris and microplastics adopted at the first UN Environment Assembly in June 2014, noted with concern the impacts of such materials on the marine environment, fisheries, tourism and development calling for strengthened action, in particular by addressing such materials at the source. The resolution encouraged stakeholders to collaborate with the GPML and called for the strengthening of information exchange mechanisms, requesting UNEP to present a study on marine plastic debris and microplastics for consideration by the next session of the Assembly (May 2016).

Activities

Specifically, the GPML has structured its support in the following components:

1. On-line Marine Litter Network: a web-based tool designed to enable the global marine debris community to monitor progress on implementing the Honolulu Strategy; sign on to the Honolulu Commitment, interact and share information, lessons learned, and tools. It will promote the GPML and facilitate access to other online resources and initiatives without trying to substitute them, thereby enhancing coordination and resource efficiency.
2. Regional activities designed to introduce the GPML and the online platform through "regional nodes": This could include support to implementation of the Honolulu Strategy through e.g. the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAP), with the view to facilitate the development of regional policy instruments aligned with the Honolulu Strategy framework.
3. Demonstration projects: facilitate development and implementation of high-impact, practical demonstration projects under the GPML together with partners within three main areas: Reducing the inflow of solid waste into the marine environment; Life cycle approach; Plastics recycling/re-design.
4. Public-private partnerships: UNEP will seek, through the GPML, to build functional partnerships with the private sector, to promote practical plastics reduction measures and support complementary policies. Source reduction and corporate social responsibility will be promoted, through measures such as plastics disclosure and greater manufacturer responsibility.

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