

Information from the SAICM Secretariat, 9 November 2020

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**Submitted to the fourth meeting of the
ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics**

Context:

- 1) Some plastics contain chemicals that are considered to be harmful for health and the environment, such as phthalates, poly-fluorinated chemicals, bisphenol A (BPA) and brominated flame retardants.
- 2) Harmful chemicals need to be excluded from the value chain as early as possible, in the design phase, the production phase, or, if not possible, during plastics recycling, to protect human health and ecosystems. This will also enable a higher degree of recyclability and support a toxic-free circular economy of plastics.
- 3) The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) secretariat, together with UNEP, released a policy brief on Plastics and Chemicals of Concern in Consumer Products in July 2020 for policymakers. The brief highlights the following needs and considerations:
 - a. Importance of the removal of chemicals of concern as a preventive measure through design of products, as well as enhancing regulations and their enforcement.
 - b. Strengthened science and technical knowledge with regards to chemical additives.
 - c. Increased traceability and reliability of information along value chains and strengthened commitments and standards to phase-out certain chemical additives in plastics.
 - d. Coordinated actions across the value-chain of plastic products, promoting collective solutions and innovation for circularity.
- 4) The brief is available at the following link:
<https://saicmknowledge.org/library/plastics-and-chemicals-concern-consumer-products>.

Global considerations:

- 5) Chemicals and waste are specifically addressed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development under SDG 12 on sustainable consumption and production, with target 12.4 directly addressing chemicals. Furthermore, a number of substances of concern are already controlled at the global level under the Stockholm Convention.
- 6) The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) is a voluntary policy framework to promote and implement chemical safety globally that is administered by UN Environment. It is unique in its ambition as an inclusive multi-stakeholder and multi-sector

framework. It provides the space and opportunity for governments, industry, non-government organizations, international organizations and academics to discuss, coordinate and act on chemicals throughout their life cycle in an atmosphere of trust and cooperation.

- 7) SAICM's emerging policy issues already address a number of areas linked to marine plastic litter and microplastics, such as endocrine-disrupting chemicals, nanomaterials and the promotion of chemicals related information within product value chains.
- 8) With the current SAICM objective running to 2020, an intersessional process is underway to prepare recommendations on SAICM and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020 for consideration by the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM) at its fifth session, currently scheduled for 5-9 July 2021.
- 9) The scope of SAICM today is broad and currently does not expressly address marine plastic litter or microplastics. The on-going discussions for beyond 2020 provide opportunities for new programmatic areas and focus in moving forward, including for capacity building, knowledge sharing and in promoting innovation.
- 10) Stakeholders wishing to participate in the SAICM process should contact the Strategic Approach secretariat at saicm.chemicals@unep.org.
- 11) More information available at: www.saicm.org

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