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**United Nations Environment Assembly of the  
United Nations Environment Programme  
Third session**

Nairobi, 4–6 December 2017

Item 5 of the provisional agenda\*

**Performance of the programme of work and budget,  
including implementation of the resolutions of the  
Environment Assembly**

**Progress in the implementation of resolution 2/11 on marine  
plastic litter and microplastics**

**Report of the Executive Director**

*Summary*

In its resolution 2/11 on marine plastic litter and microplastics, the United Nations Environment Assembly requested the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to assist member States, especially developing countries, with emphasis on small island developing States and least developed countries, upon their request, in the development and implementation of national or regional measures and action plans; and to undertake an assessment of the effectiveness of relevant international, regional and subregional governance strategies and approaches to combat marine plastic litter and microplastics, taking into consideration the relevant regulatory frameworks and identifying possible gaps and options for addressing them, including through regional cooperation and coordination, and to present the assessment to the Environment Assembly at its next session, within available resources for that purpose.

The present report has been prepared in response to the request set out in resolution 2/11 that the Executive Director report to the United Nations Environment Assembly at its third session on the implementation of the resolution.

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\* UNEP/EA.3/1.

## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2/11 on marine plastic litter and microplastics, the United Nations Environment Assembly requested the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to assist member States, especially developing countries, with emphasis on small island developing States and least developed countries, upon their request, in the development and implementation of national or regional measures and action plans; and to undertake an assessment of the effectiveness of relevant international, regional and subregional governance strategies and approaches to combat marine plastic litter and microplastics, taking into consideration the relevant regulatory frameworks and identifying possible gaps and options for addressing them, including through regional cooperation and coordination, and to present the assessment to the Environment Assembly at its next session, within available resources for that purpose. The resolution is consistent with expected accomplishment (b) of the Ecosystem management subprogramme, subprogramme 3 of the programme of work for 2016–2017, namely “Use of ecosystem approach in countries to sustain ecosystem services from coastal and marine systems is increased”.

## II. Progress in the implementation of resolution 2/11

2. Pursuant to the request of the Assembly to undertake an assessment of the effectiveness of relevant international, regional and subregional governance strategies and approaches to combat marine plastic litter and microplastics, the Environment Programme established an advisory group to guide the development of the assessment.

3. A revised version of a massive open online course on marine litter was prepared in English and will be available in Spanish in early 2018. Preparations are under way to develop a two-week-long course under the leadership track in all six of the official languages of the United Nations and in Portuguese.

4. An innovation challenge for universities is currently under way, as are preparations for the sixth International Marine Debris Conference, to be held from 12 to 16 March 2018 in San Diego, United States of America. Since the second session of the Assembly, the Environment Programme has launched the publications *Marine Litter: Vital Graphics* and *Marine Litter Legislation: A Toolkit for Policymakers*. The activities are in support of the implementation of resolution 2/11, as well as the Global Partnership on Marine Litter and key performance indicators in the programme of work in relation to the development of action plans and national programmes of action.

5. Support is also being provided to the development and revision of marine litter action plans in the following regions and countries: South-East Asia, South Asia, the South Pacific, North-East Pacific, Panama and Sierra Leone. Implementation of existing action plans is also being supported in the greater Caribbean, Mediterranean and the North-West Pacific regions, where regional nodes of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter have been established. Another node is also being set up in the South Pacific.

6. The Clean Seas campaign was launched by the Environment Programme in February 2017, with the aim of engaging Governments, the general public, civil society and the private sector in the fight against marine plastic litter. Thirty countries have joined the campaign to date. The commitments made by those countries are displayed on the website of the Clean Seas campaign ([www.cleans seas.org](http://www.cleans seas.org)).

7. Related expenditure to date since the second session of the Assembly has reached \$1 million, with the funds provided by the Government of Norway. Additional resources have been secured from the Governments of France, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden for the continued implementation of priority actions.

8. Implementation of priority actions with respect to the development of action plans has taken place through close collaboration with the regional seas conventions and action plans. With respect to the assessment, the Environment Programme has collaborated with the University of Wollongong, in Australia, and Istanbul Bilgi University, in Turkey, in preparing the assessment, entitled “Combating marine plastic litter and microplastics: an assessment of the effectiveness of relevant international, regional and subregional governance strategies and approaches” (UNEP/EA.3/INF/5).

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### III. Recommendations and suggested action

9. The United Nations Environment Assembly may wish:

(a) To urge member States and other stakeholders to implement the provisions of United Nations Environment Assembly resolutions 1/6 of 27 June 2014, on marine plastic debris and microplastics, and 2/11 of 26 May 2016, on marine plastic litter and microplastics;

(b) To consider the options presented in the assessment of the effectiveness of relevant international, regional and subregional governance strategies and approaches to combat marine plastic litter and microplastics;<sup>1</sup>

(c) To urge member States to review and revise existing frameworks to address marine plastic litter and microplastics, adding a component that addresses coordination with industry;

(d) To call for the development of a new global architecture to address marine plastic litter and microplastics, with a multi-layered governance approach.

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<sup>1</sup> UNEP/EA.3/INF/5.