

## **India Water Foundation**

### **Item 5 -Consideration of submissions on potential response options pursuant to paragraph 10 (d) of United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 3/7 on marine litter and microplastics.**

At least 8 million tons of plastic end up in our oceans every year. Floating plastic debris are currently the most abundant items of marine litter. Waste plastic makes up 80% of all marine debris from surface waters to deep-sea sediments. Plastic has been detected on shorelines of all the continents, with more plastic materials found near popular tourist destinations and densely populated areas. Plastic pollution is the most widespread problem affecting the marine environment. It also threatens ocean health, food safety and quality, human health, coastal tourism, and contributes to climate change.

The most visible and disturbing impacts of marine plastics are the ingestion, suffocation, and entanglement of hundreds of marine species. Marine wildlife such as seabirds, whales, fishes and turtles, mistake plastic waste for prey, and most die of starvation as their stomachs are filled with plastic debris. They also suffer from lacerations, infections, reduced ability to swim, and internal injuries. Floating plastics also contribute to the spread of invasive marine organisms and bacteria, which disrupt ecosystems. Invisible plastic has been identified in tap water, beer, salt and are present in all samples collected in the world's oceans, including the Arctic. Several chemicals used in the production of plastic materials are known to be carcinogenic and to interfere with the body's endocrine system, causing developmental, reproductive, neurological, and immune disorders in both humans and wildlife. Toxic contaminants also accumulate on the surface of plastic materials because of prolonged exposure to seawater. When marine organisms ingest plastic debris, these contaminants enter their digestive systems, and overtime accumulate in the food web. The transfer of contaminants between marine species and humans through consumption of seafood has been identified as a health hazard but has not yet been adequately researched. Plastic, which is a petroleum product, also contributes to global warming. If plastic waste is incinerated, it releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, thereby increasing carbon emissions. Plastic waste damages the aesthetic value of tourist destinations, leading to decreased tourism-related incomes and major economic costs related to the cleaning and maintenance of the sites.

### **Global Issue Global Call**

The solution to addressing marine litter requires global and transboundary action because the current solutions only addresses some aspects of pollution in the protection of the marine environment. It has been discussed previously the difficulties faced in attempting to calculate and place a monetary value on the costs and benefits of various response options, particularly when including environmental and social costs in addition to economic costs. For some least developed and developing countries the alternatives to plastic has proved to be more expensive, the price for alternatives to some plastics can be as high as four times. The adoption of circular economy via Reduce reuse and recycling is one of the most effective tools to combat pollution. Private sector should be encouraged and engaged to introduce recycling effectively. Measures to reduce and eliminate marine plastics through legislation and regulatory enforcement should be discussed. There is need for cost effective solutions to reduce marine litter to ensure sustainability and holistic approach, involving regional and international cooperation

Countries must foster a coordinated governance strategy towards a more holistic view of the cause-effect pathways, evaluate socio-economic environmental consequences, strengthen awareness and share knowledge, share innovations and case studies, technology transfer, adopt circular principles and enhance capacity building to address the issue of marine plastic litter and microplastics.

Countries should come to a consensus to tackle plastic pollution and incorporate environmentally sound best practices within the national context. Two-thirds of the plastic pollution entering our oceans from across the world come from the 20 most polluting rivers, out of 10 highest polluting rivers, Ganga stands 2nd this is not surprising when India annually dumps 6 lakh tonnes of plastic which finally enters the oceans and with a vast India's coastline of 7516.6 km stopping plastic waste from entering the ocean is a huge challenge. NGO's like us are constantly working among grass roots, communities residing on the banks of rivers and along the coasts line to inculcate behavioral change and create awareness about plastic use and marine litter. For example, in India the northeastern state of Sikkim was the first state to ban plastics bottles & disposable foam products to reduce its plastic footprint and manage its waste in a more efficient and eco-friendly manner. Marine pollution across India's 7,500 km coastline the ministry of Earth Sciences began work on a comprehensive study to identify the source of litter, especially the plastic waste that flows into India's coastal waters. The exercise is the first step towards framing a National Marine Litter Policy with the objective to clean up the oceans, which is in line with UN Environment's global 'Clean Seas Campaign'

There should be a mechanism for all stakeholders on the issue of marine litter cooperation between governments, intergovernmental organizations, regional bodies, the private sector, civil society, and academia, inter alia. There should be an improved design to reduce marine litter and (3Rs) principle reduction, reuse and recycling should be further strengthened, the maximization of resource efficiency and minimization of waste generation.

Need to identify and address gaps and avoid duplication of effort, as well as information on financing opportunities, and to facilitate matchmaking of projects and initiatives with funding. The governments, Multistakeholders, Private sector, academia and other stakeholders should support the implementation of legal, policy, institutional and other relevant frameworks that enforce international law relevant to marine litter and microplastics.