

GUIDANCE ON POLICY AND LEGISLATION FOR INTEGRATED WASTE MANAGEMENT DURING A PANDEMIC



Executive Summary



The **overarching objective** of this guidance is to support countries in their efforts to **develop or revise their legislation and policies to foster better preparedness and responses**, in the event of future pandemics, to address health and environment risks associated with waste management.

To this end, the guidance draws upon **existing waste management guidelines issued by international organizations** on key principles of, and approaches to, integrated waste management. The guidance seeks to complement the existing UNEP 2016 *Guidelines for Framework Legislation for Integrated Waste Management*. It also gathers together and analyses **national experience of measures adopted for COVID-19 waste management**, using a combination of in-depth case studies and results from an online survey distributed to the National Focal Points of the Montevideo Programme V (Montevideo National Focal Points). This experience illustrates the **different legislative and policy approaches** countries have taken to deal with increased quantities of waste and other waste management challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as **overall trends** in the kinds of measures adopted and areas where **challenges** arose.

A key finding from the analysis of national measures is the **absence of examples of a comprehensive approach** to the management of COVID-19 waste in line with best-practice concepts and integrated waste management principles. In particular, approaches to COVID-19 waste management have **focused on health-care wastes and infection risks**, with limited consideration of broader environmental and social impacts (including gender dimensions) of the increased quantities of waste produced during the pandemic. There is therefore an opportunity for countries to transition from initial emergency responses to longer-term planning for pandemic waste management by implementing elements of a best-practice and integrated waste management legislative response into their relevant frameworks.

The final chapter of the guidance outlines the **elements of framework measures** that could be adopted by countries (or used as a basis for revision of existing structures) to enhance preparedness to deal with waste management challenges in future pandemic scenarios. Rather than recommending a one-size-fits all approach, the guidance offers a checklist with a menu of options for countries to consider for inclusion in pandemic waste legislation and policy guidelines, recognizing the varying context for application in different countries. Options are provided in relation to each of the following elements of potential framework measures:

- statements of legislative purpose and objectives framed around integrated waste management;
- definitions of waste;
- allocation of major responsibilities for waste management;
- provisions pertaining to waste sector regulation;
- specific integrated waste management principles for application in pandemic scenarios related to the whole life cycle for waste management, from minimization to disposal, reuse and recycling;
- particular measures applicable to specific waste streams produced in increased quantities during a pandemic, such as plastic wastes and health-care wastes associated with use and disposal of personal protective equipment (PPE);
- provisions pertaining to the environmental and social impacts of pandemic wastes;
- provisions regarding public participation and access to information;
- compliance and enforcement measures, including penalties;
- technology, research and development aspects.

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