



## OCEAN ACTION HUB

### OCEAN FORUM

#### *Marine Pollution Online Discussion*

6 – 24 March 2017

#### Background Note

*Target 14.1: By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution*

#### *About the Forum*

The [Ocean Action Hub](http://www.oceanactionhub.org) is hosting a series of online discussions over the course of the preparatory process for The Ocean Conference in order to engage stakeholders in assessing the challenges and opportunities related to delivering on SDG14 implementation. Bringing together governments, UN agencies, intergovernmental organizations, international financial institutions, NGOs, civil society organizations, academic institutions, the scientific community, private sector, philanthropic organizations and other actors, each online discussion will focus on one of the agreed Partnership Dialogue themes and implementation of relevant SDG targets and are being launched following the conclusion of the Preparatory Meeting in New York (15-16 February 2016). The first discussion is focused on Target 14.1: Combatting Marine Pollution: <http://www.oceanactionhub.org/marine-pollution-discussion>

#### *About Marine Pollution*

<sup>1</sup>Marine pollution originates from a number of land-based and marine sources, including riverine discharges, agricultural and industrial run-off, urban outfalls, municipal or industrial wastewater, atmospheric deposition, illegal or indiscriminate dumping, accidents (e.g. oil spills), fishing operations, maritime transport and off-shore activities (e.g. seabed mining). More than 80% of marine pollution is derived from land-based sources. The introduction of invasive species, including through the exchange of ship ballast water, also remains a major concern. Population density in coastal zones is much higher than in non-coastal areas and urbanization will accelerate this trend combined with the predicted world population increase. Biodiversity-rich areas have a disproportionately high representation of ports and coastal infrastructure, intensive coastal land uses, fishing activities and aquaculture.<sup>2</sup> This trend has already had significant environmental impacts on oceans and seas, particularly as a result of the lack of environmentally sound waste management in coastal cities.<sup>3</sup> Wastewater, nutrient load pollution and solid waste discharges, including in the form of litter, plastics

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Edited extract from the Background note of the Secretary-General for the preparatory process of the Ocean Conference A/71/212.

<sup>2</sup> A/69/71.

<sup>3</sup> A/70/112.

and micro-plastics, are a major threat. New wastewater treatment technologies and waste management processes may have the ability to minimize problems, but there can be gaps in the capacity to apply these newer processes, often because of the costs involved in particular in developing countries.

Progress has also been made in improving response capabilities, though much remains to be done<sup>4</sup>. While the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) provides a general legal framework to address marine pollution from land-based sources, the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA) is currently the only global mechanism entirely dedicated to addressing this issue. Under the GPA framework, 98 countries have prepared National Plans of Action and/or relevant national plans/strategies to address land-based pollution. Financial constraints or regulatory environments limit the degree of implementation of the national actions. Steps have also been taken to reduce or, where possible, eliminate many of the impacts of heavy metals and hazardous substances, with positive trends in some parts of the world, even though problems persist in some local areas. New technologies and processes have also been widely developed that can potentially address these problems, but there are gaps in the capacities to apply these newer processes as they are very costly.<sup>5</sup> As regards pollution in relation to ship generated waste, the major obstacle to the implementation of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships has been the lack of, or insufficient, reception facilities in many ports.<sup>6</sup> Over the past 40 years, global rules and standards have been developed to regulate most of the ship-related sources of pollution. Steps are now being taken to further strengthen the uniform enforcement of these rules and standards around the globe. Good progress has been made in reducing pollution from ships originating from catastrophic events (shipwrecks, collisions and groundings) and chronic impacts from regular operational discharges.<sup>7</sup>

Policies to reduce marine pollution will no doubt limit the vulnerability of marine ecosystems, particularly with the added stresses imposed by climate change and influences on the marine environment. For example, enhancing waste management in coastal urban areas should be a priority, as should be the minimization of pollution of freshwaters which convey pollutants to the marine environment. Sustainable consumption and production is highly relevant to incorporation of circular economy principles and practices that touch on higher resource use efficiency, recycling and minimization of harmful discharges to the environment.

#### *Discussion Questions:*

1. What are the **challenges** faced in your country, community or region in achieving Target 14.1 aimed at combatting marine pollution?
2. What do you see as the **priority actions** which we can all rally around in global 'Calls for Action' in achieving Target 14.1?
3. Please share any **innovative partnerships** aimed at combatting marine pollution - existing or proposed - that you are aware of or involved in that could be launched at the June Ocean Conference and can advance effective actions from local to global levels.

***To participate, post your response in the discussion forum here:***  
<http://www.oceanactionhub.org/marine-pollution-discussion>

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<sup>4</sup> United Nations, 2016, First Global Integrated Marine Assessment.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations, 2016, First Global Integrated Marine Assessment.

<sup>6</sup> A/71/74.

<sup>7</sup> United Nations, 2016, First Global Integrated Marine Assessment, Chapter 17