

## OceanCare Statement

### **Seventeenth Meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea on 'Marine debris, plastics and microplastics', New York, 13-17<sup>th</sup> June 2016**

We have participated at many UNICPOLOS meetings, especially when environmental issues have been discussed. This year, we commend the UNGA for progressing dialogue about 'Marine debris, plastics and microplastics'.

We look forward to advancing actions to prevent, reduce and control pollution from marine debris, plastics and microplastics through the opportunity of the expert panels at this meeting.

The world's oceans are home to vast numbers of marine species. These oceans deliver crucial ecosystem services, and provide food and income for communities around the world. There is nowhere on earth that does not need the ocean in some form. We are not respecting this important biome. Marine plastic pollution extends to every ocean and coast and already causes enormous economic cost, ecological damage and social impact. It is estimated that around 8.8 million tons of plastics enter the oceans every year. There could be a ten-fold increase by 2025 if urgent steps are not taken.

We believe that mitigating the impact of marine debris, plastics and microplastics necessitates the global community advancing effective legal frameworks and regulation at the global and national levels. As part of this framework, OceanCare urges:

- the phase-in of comprehensive national waste management legislation, adequate structures for waste treatment, and preventive measures;
- the promotion of a progressive plastic economy and the phase-out of disposable plastic waste;
- that baseline references are developed to allow the measurement of plastic pollution extents and trends;
- that the most hazardous toxic plastics are immediately phased out and future use banned;
- the immediate ban of microplastics and nanoplastics in cosmetic products;
- any research and measures to reduce floating marine litter does not exacerbate harm;
- the urgent development of research and guidelines to prevent resin pellets from contaminating the environment during transport;
- giving focus to capacity building workshops for disentanglement and marine animal rescue programmes; and
- establishing a professional global animal rescue network.

### **Reduction of plastic waste**

OceanCare recognises that reducing marine plastic pollution requires preventing plastic debris entering the ocean in the first place. Achieving this goal needs comprehensive waste management legislation, adequate structures for waste treatment, and preventive measures. It can also be supported by a progressive plastic economy based on circular principles (e.g., reuse, recycle) and the phase-out of disposable plastic waste (e.g., packaging).

### **Assessment and monitoring of marine plastic debris**

Addressing marine plastic pollution needs a coordinated global approach for both control and monitoring. In order to assess and monitor action progress and effectiveness, as pursued by the Rio+20 commitment for a significant reduction of marine litter and of the UN Sustainable Development Goal 14, OceanCare supports the creation of a baseline reference which will allow the measurement of

plastic pollution extents and trends. This will support the systematic deployment of measures to stop plastic pollution.

### **Toxicity of plastic debris**

The chemical harm of some plastics raises sufficient concern to warrant their phase-out. OceanCare recognises that there is an urgent need for a classification of plastics according to their hazardousness. Among the most problematic plastics in terms of their difficult recyclability and toxic chemical contents are polyvinyl chloride (PVC), polystyrene, polyurethane and polycarbonate. We urge that, as a start, these four are immediately classified as hazardous and future production banned.

### **Removal of marine plastic debris**

We commended the various worldwide initiatives for marine litter removal such as from the EU Maritime and Fisheries Fund. We have been pleased to participate in beach cleaning and the collection of lost fishing gear and we have endorsed the development of guidelines and measures regarding discarded and lost fishing gear by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

We welcome initiatives directed towards the removal of plastic debris but are concerned about the risk to plankton biomass if the plastic skimming method impacts plankton abundance. OceanCare supports research to ensure that efforts to reduce floating marine litter do not exacerbate harm.

### **Primary microplastic pollution**

It is imperative to reduce primary microplastic pollution of the environment. OceanCare recognises the urgent need for a ban of microplastic (including bio-based/biodegradable plastic microbeads) and nanoplastics in personal care products such as face soaps, exfoliating shower gels, toothpastes and body scrubs where they are used as abrasive scrubbers and for cleansing purposes. We also endorse research and guidelines to prevent resin pellets contaminating the environment during transport.

### **Rescue of marine animals entangled in plastic debris**

Marine plastic debris, in particular lost fishing gear, is a dangerous trap for thousands of marine animals. Greater effort needs to be focused on capacity building workshops for disentanglement and marine animals rescue programmes. A professional global animal rescue network should be established.

### **Raising environmental awareness**

It is of utmost importance to raise public awareness about the source, fate, and impact of marine plastic debris. We must provide adequate information about how individuals can reduce disposable plastic use and environmental plastic pollution. OceanCare supports building coordinated global efforts to increase awareness such as through the UNEP Global Partnership on Marine Litter for example.

**We encourage governments to implement the decisions they have committed to through relevant multilateral environment agreements, especially the *Basel Convention*, and urge that an international taskforce is established to close gaps in our legal framework.**

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