

BC-14/13: Further actions to address plastic waste under the Basel Convention

The Conference of the Parties,

Noting with concern that high and rapidly increasing levels of marine plastic litter and microplastics represent a serious environmental problem on a global scale, negatively affecting marine biodiversity, ecosystems, fisheries, maritime transport, recreation and tourism, and local societies and economies, and that plastic litter and microplastics can also be found on land and in rivers, wetlands and lakes,

Acknowledging that more sustainable management, production and use of plastics throughout their life cycle can facilitate plastic waste management and contribute to reducing marine litter and the threat it poses to the environment, to livelihoods of coastal communities and potentially to human health, and reduce the loss of value, resources and energy,

Taking into account the limited capabilities of the developing countries to manage hazardous wastes and other wastes,

Recalling the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals and targets, in particular target 12.5,

Noting the decisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal at its fourteenth meeting, whereby it decided to develop guidance on the development of inventories of plastic waste,¹ adopted practical manuals and guidance supplementing the toolkit related to environmentally sound management, which is relevant for addressing issues related to marine plastic litter and microplastics,² and requested the Secretariat to submit to the World Customs Organization a proposal for amending the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System to allow for the identification of plastic waste,³

I

General

1. *Emphasizes* that work under the Basel Convention can and will play an important role in addressing the high and rapidly increasing levels of marine plastic litter and microplastics by preventing plastic waste from entering the marine environment;
2. *Notes* that the prevention, minimization and environmentally sound management of plastic waste as well as the effective control of its transboundary movement will reduce the amount of plastic waste entering the environment;
3. *Commits* itself to working to support efforts to achieve the prevention, the minimization and the environmentally sound management of plastic waste, as well as the effective control of its transboundary movement;
4. *Stresses* the importance of cooperation and coordination with other international organizations and activities through existing mechanisms, and in particular the multi-stakeholder platform within the United Nations Environment Programme, established by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its fourth session, while avoiding duplication;
5. *Notes* that the work under the Basel Convention on technical assistance and information exchange, including the work done by the regional centres of the Basel Convention and the

¹ Decision BC-14/10.

² Decision BC-14/3.

³ Decision BC-14/9.

Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, has the potential to support efforts to prevent and minimize plastic waste and to support their environmentally sound management;

6. *Takes note* of the report of the Open-ended ad hoc expert group referred to in paragraph 10 of resolution 3/7 of the United Nations Environment Assembly;

7. *Welcomes* the resolutions of the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly on marine plastic litter and microplastics,⁴ on addressing single-use plastic products pollution,⁵ on environmentally sound management of waste⁶ and on sound management of chemicals and waste;⁷

II

Preventing and minimizing the generation of plastic waste, improving its environmentally sound management and controlling its transboundary movement

8. *Underlines* that reducing the generation of hazardous wastes and other wastes to a minimum and reducing to a minimum and controlling transboundary movements of such wastes consistent with their environmentally sound and efficient management are among the general obligations of all Parties to the Basel Convention;

9. *Emphasizes* the need to adopt a life-cycle approach to plastics and to increase resource efficiency and the importance of the waste management hierarchy;

10. *Also emphasizes* the relevance of the Cartagena Declaration on the Prevention, Minimization and Recovery of Hazardous Wastes and Other Wastes⁸ and the importance of the activities identified in the road map for action on its implementation⁹ in addressing plastic waste, including challenges related to marine plastic litter;

11. *Welcomes* the many national, regional and international initiatives that countries, organizations, industry, regional centres and civil society have taken in response to the challenge of marine plastic litter and microplastics, including regulatory action, financial and other incentives, extended producer responsibility, public awareness and voluntary action;

12. *Calls upon* Parties and others:

(a) To make further efforts at the domestic level to prevent and minimize the generation of plastic waste, including through increasing the durability, reusability and recyclability of plastic products and furthering the repair, refurbishment and remanufacturing of plastic products, where technically and economically feasible;

(b) To promote the environmentally sound and efficient management of plastic waste, for example, single-use plastic and fishing gear, by improving the collection, transport, treatment and recycling of plastic waste, by improving or creating markets for recycled materials made from plastic waste, by improving other means of recovery, by reducing transboundary movement of plastic waste to a minimum, consistent with environmentally sound and efficient management, and by reducing the discharge of plastic waste and microplastics;

(c) To ensure that transboundary movements of plastic waste are undertaken in accordance with the provisions of the Convention as well as with related national laws and relevant regional agreements;

13. *Encourages* Parties and others:

⁴ UNEP/EA.4/Res.6.

⁵ UNEP/EA.4/Res.9.

⁶ UNEP/EA.4/Res.7.

⁷ UNEP/EA.4/Res.8.

⁸ UNEP/CHW.10/28, annex IV.

⁹ Decision BC-12/2.

(a) To set time-bound targets and adopt adequate measures to ensure that plastic packaging is designed to be reusable or recyclable in a cost-effective manner, the plastic packaging recycling rate by weight is monitored and significantly improved at the global, regional and national levels, and recycled content in plastic products is significantly increased;

(b) Taking into account the ministerial declaration adopted at the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, to significantly reduce single-use plastic products, notably through specific measures, such as the development of affordable and environmentally friendly alternatives, the use of substitutes for such products where alternatives are economically available, the reduction in their consumption, the setting of specific collection targets and obligations for producers to cover the costs of waste management as appropriate, clean-up and awareness-raising measures, including through extended producer responsibility schemes and measures to inform consumers about reuse, waste management options and the impacts of littering;

(c) To take measures to foster innovation in relation to plastic waste, taking into account the life-cycle approach, with a view to better addressing marine plastic litter and microplastics;

III

Reducing the risk from hazardous constituents in plastic waste

14. *Notes* that plastic waste may contain potentially hazardous substances, or may be contaminated by hazardous substances, or mixed with hazardous wastes, and, as such, may pose a risk to human health and the environment, including marine and terrestrial ecosystems;

15. *Strongly encourages* Parties, taking into account their capabilities, and others, especially the private sector, to make efforts to create new technologies and processes, or improve existing technologies to remove or reduce the use of hazardous constituents in the production of plastics and at any subsequent stage of their life cycle, in order to facilitate plastic waste management, including during the recycling process, and to provide financial and technological support;

16. *Welcomes* the work of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants to eliminate or control the production or use of persistent organic pollutants in plastic products that may reduce the presence of such pollutants in plastics waste, thus contributing to reducing the risks associated with marine plastic litter and microplastics at the global level;

IV

Review of Annexes I and III

17. *Requests* the expert working group on the review of Annexes I, III and IV and related aspects of Annexes VIII and IX to the Basel Convention to consider, as part of its mandate, whether any additional constituents or characteristics in relation to plastic waste should be added to Annex I or III, respectively, to the Convention;

V

Technical guidelines

18. *Decides* to update the technical guidelines for the Identification and Environmentally Sound Management of Plastic Wastes and for their Disposal;¹⁰

19. *Invites* Parties to consider serving as lead countries for the updating of the guidelines and to inform the Secretariat of their willingness to do so by 31 August 2019;

20. *Decides* to establish a small intersessional working group, operating by electronic means and, subject to the availability of resources, through face-to-face meetings, to undertake the updating of the guidelines;

21. *Invites* Parties and others to nominate experts to participate in the small intersessional working group and to inform the Secretariat of their nominations by 31 August 2019;

¹⁰ Decision VI/21 and UNEP/CHW.6/21, annex.

22. *Requests* the lead country, or, in the absence of a lead country, the Secretariat, subject to the availability of resources, to prepare the draft updated technical guidelines in consultation with the small intersessional working group for consideration by the Open-ended Working Group at its twelfth meeting;

VI

Basel Convention Partnership on Plastic Waste

23. *Welcomes* the proposal to establish a Basel Convention partnership on plastic waste;
24. *Decides* to establish a working group of the Basel Convention Partnership on Plastic Waste;
25. *Adopts* the terms of reference for the Partnership;¹¹
26. *Requests* the working group to implement the workplan for the biennium 2020–2021;¹²
27. *Also requests* the working group to coordinate and collaborate on activities with other organizations and initiatives, as appropriate, in order to achieve synergies and avoid duplication, and in particular with the Household Waste Partnership and the Global Partnership on Marine Litter and initiatives pursuant to resolution 4/7 of the United Nations Environment Assembly;
28. *Invites* Parties and others, in accordance with the terms of reference for the Partnership, to nominate members of the working group of the Partnership and to inform the Secretariat of their nominations by 31 August 2019;
29. *Requests* the Secretariat to identify relevant actors, and invite them to participate in the Partnership, by 31 August 2019;
30. *Emphasizes* that the Partnership does not have the authority to create additional or abrogate existing rights or responsibilities of Parties under the Basel Convention;
31. *Requests* the Secretariat to facilitate and provide expertise to the Partnership, subject to the availability of resources;

VII

Public awareness, education and information exchange

32. *Recognizes* that behavioural changes by all stakeholders play an important role in the prevention, minimization and collection of plastic waste;
33. *Invites* Parties and others to enhance public awareness, education and information exchange at the national level regarding plastic waste and the importance of its improved management, including through promoting behavioural change by all stakeholders towards its prevention, minimization, collection and recycling;

VIII

Further consideration

34. *Decides* to include, among other activities pertaining to plastic waste, in the work programme of the Open-ended Working Group for 2020–2021, under topic II D on plastic waste, the consideration of the following:
- (a) Whether, how and when the Conference of the Parties should assess the effectiveness of the measures taken under the Convention to address the plastic waste contributing to marine plastic litter and microplastics;

¹¹ UNEP/CHW.14/INF/16/Rev.1, annex I.

¹² UNEP/CHW.14/INF/16/Rev.1, annex II.

(b) Which further activities could possibly be conducted under the Convention in response to developments in scientific knowledge and environmental information related to plastic waste as a source of land pollution, marine plastic litter and microplastics;

35. *Invites* Parties and others to submit to the Secretariat, by 1 June 2020, information on the following plastic waste referred to in entry Y48 in Annex II and entry B3011 in Annex IX to the Convention:

(a) Plastic waste almost exclusively consisting of one cured resin or condensation product including but not limited to the following:

- (i) Urea formaldehyde resins;
- (ii) Phenol formaldehyde resins;
- (iii) Melamine formaldehyde resins;
- (iv) Epoxy resins;
- (v) Alkyd resins;

(b) Plastic waste almost exclusively consisting of one of the following fluorinated polymer wastes:

- (i) Perfluoroethylene/propylene (FEP);
- (ii) Perfluoroalkoxy alkanes:
 - a. Tetrafluoroethylene/perfluoroalkyl vinyl ether (PFA);
 - b. Tetrafluoroethylene/perfluoromethyl vinyl ether (MFA);
- (iii) Polyvinylfluoride (PVF);
- (iv) Polyvinylidene fluoride (PVDF);

36. *Requests* the Secretariat to compile the information referred to in paragraph 35 of the present decision for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its fifteenth meeting and make it available on the website of the Convention by 1 September 2020;

37. *Also requests* the Secretariat to communicate the decisions of the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties related to plastic waste, including marine plastic litter and microplastics,¹³ to the United Nations Environment Assembly, the Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention, and the International Conference on Chemicals Management;

38. *Further requests* the Secretariat to report on progress in the implementation of the present decision to the Open-ended Working Group at its twelfth meeting and to the Conference of the Parties at its fifteenth meeting.

¹³ Decisions BC-14/12, BC-14/13, BC-14/18, BC-14/21 and BC-14/23.