Addressing Plastic Pollution

Dr. Ulf Jaeckel

Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Germany
Plastics - what is the problem?

- Plastics makes more than 80% of all marine litter items
- Plastic items stay in the environment
- Fishing gear makes up to 30% of items found on beaches and more than 50% of marine litter amount
- Plastics in the sea endangers marine life and birds
- Plastics in rivers and lakes endangers human health, species living there and drinking water supply
- Plastics on the beaches endangers sea life, birds and tourism
- Waste management systems in most countries do not offer sufficient handling of plastics
Material Attributes

• Plastic is
  • light, easy to handle
  • durable
  • protecting food and other goods
  • cheap
• Plastic can be reused or recycled
• Plastic parts are often small and difficult to sort and recycle
• Plastic is often used in compounds
• Several types of plastics are used and often not identifiable
• Microplastic is not filtered in sewage systems
• Plastic has advantages in an LCA compared to other materials
UNEA resolution on marine plastic litter and microplastics

“5. Requests the ED, through its 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, to elaborate guidelines on plastic use and production in order to inform consumers, including on standards and labels, to incentivize businesses and retailers to commit to sustainable practices and products, and to support governments to promote the use of information tools and incentives to foster sustainable consumption and production”
Discussion on plastics at CI-SCP MAC

- Resolution addresses Executive Director UN Environment and the One Planet Network
- Issues mentioned involve all programme areas and beyond
- Coordinating role of the 10 YFP Secretariat
- A working group could be set up and involve representatives from all of the programmes and the Life Cycle Initiative.
- CI-SCP could offer the utilisation of the *Guidelines for Providing Product Sustainability Information* as a base for creating a set of guidelines directly for consumers.
- Challenges of making guidelines applicable for all nations and consumers (for example due to different waste management practices)
- Consumers need to know about single use plastics, need to understand what bioplastics are, what is a sustainable use of plastics etc.
- The Resolution explicitly calls for information on standards and labels for plastics – research on this is required.
Proposed Workplan (1)

Objective: Develop a guidance to support the private sector to provide quality information on handling of plastics (packaging and others) to consumers

Approach:
- Based on existing knowledge from UN Environment, work with plastic producers and plastics-use/packaging-use companies including shipping and fishing industry to reach agreement on providing quality and structured information on plastic packaging, and approaches to communicate to consumers (such as labels, standards, apps etc.)
- Apply the “Guidelines for Providing Product Sustainability Information” to generate effective consumer information related to packaging, by testing it in different cases/companies, in order to explore best ways to generate behavior change among consumers
- Compile best practices and seek feedback from multi-stakeholders: government, business, NGOs, academia etc.
- Give guidance to plastic producing and using companies including shipping and fishing industry

Expected output: A report compiling all the learnings from project activities

Timeline: August 2019 – October 2020
Proposed Workplan (2)

Implementing partners: recruit through open call for proposals (by the Secretariat)

Potential partners to collaborate:

OPN community
- Coordinating role of the OPN Secretariat
- Governments and other partners under the One Planet Network and Global Plastics Platform
- All six OPN programmes, led by the Consumer Information Programme

External stakeholders
- Ellen MacArthur Foundation, and signatories to the New Plastics Economy Global Commitment
- International organizations and intergovernmental agencies
- NGOs such as Consumers International, Consumer Goods Forum, shipping and fishing associations etc.

Support expected from partners
- Funding (cash and in-kind): Resource mobilization within the One Planet Network and its partners and outside the OPN
- First-hand experience and best cases
- Review of draft report
Thank you

ulf.jaeckel@bmu.bund.de