

## **Summary of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Litter High Level Preparatory Meeting, Brussels 30 November 2011**

### **1. Opening remarks**

DG ENV chaired the meeting. A brief introduction round was held.

### **2. Summary of the last meeting**

The concluded actions of the first ML high level preparatory meeting were briefly recalled, underlining the importance of short and medium term actions by cooperation between the relevant stakeholders.

### **3. Presentation and discussion of the action proposals received by the relevant stakeholders**

**Action 1** – Contact your relevant networks (everybody)

New members have been added to the group: Interferry, Oxo-biodegradable Plastics Association (OPA), DG ENTR. Sea Port authorities (ESPO) have been invited.

Further requests for inclusion followed (e.g.: European Bioplastics Association, further retail organisations), however with a focus on the need to keep the forum limited and thus to avoid a heavy and slowed-down process.

**Action 2** - paper to identify bottle-necks, find solutions and make new ideas operational with regard to valuing the product and exchanging best practices on the handling of one product to the possible handling of another product (EEB, EuPR, Milieu).

The proposed draft paper was discussed at length, focussing on the different angles of what constitutes marine litter and the littering itself (e.g. products packaging (on-the-go products), cigarette butts, oxo-bio-degradable plastics) with possible solutions to the problem.

Participants were requested to send their comments to the initiators of the paper before 9<sup>th</sup> December.<sup>1</sup>

DG ENV presented the report "[Marine Litter – Technical Recommendations for the Implementation of the MSFD Requirements](#)" prepared by the Technical Sub-Group on Marine Litter. This paper contains a.o. a toolbox with 15 "tool sheets", that provide a first set of methodologies for application by the MS for marine litter data collection.

It was stressed again that in this group no legislative measures are sought, but solutions should be based on (voluntary) agreements between stakeholders. This package of solutions could be presented at a high level event (see under point 4 "Characteristics of the high-level meeting").

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<sup>1</sup> DG ENTR referred to websites of European Committee of Standards (CEN) on bio-based products: <http://www.cen.eu/cen/Sectors/Sectors/Biobased/Pages/documents.aspx>

**Action 3** – visit to a recycling plant (EuPR)

EuPR will send possible dates for a visit to 2-3 recycling plants in January or early February 2012 (mixed plastic waste and agricultural plastic waste) in Belgium.

**Action 4** – possible ways to reduce the use of free plastic carrier bags (Eurocommerce, KIMO)

The relevant stakeholders pointed out that the issue would be discussed at the "retail forum" to take place on 14 December 2011 – to be continued.

**Action 5** – Member States involvement. There is a need for political commitment at MS level.

See under point 4 "Characteristics of the high-level meeting".

**Action 6** - list of actions on local clean-ups

The focus of discussions was pointed towards the possibility of organising a European Coastal Clean-up day, building on existing initiatives. Milieu ltd compiled already an overview.

In this light, reference was made to the "[International Coastal Clean-up](#)" report issued by the Ocean Conservancy on beach clean-up activities across Europe. Most MS participate in this ICC but except for Greece and UK only with a very limited number of people/locations.

It was recognized that activities should include not only activities to collect litter, but also focus on preventing litter and thus creating awareness, with the possibility of creating incentives. Clean-ups can contribute to this awareness.

To get a better picture of what is going on in MS and at local level, it was suggested to involve Member States and local authorities in the discussion. The way waste is managed seem to be the core of the problem whereby there is a clear difference between the North and South of Europe, for instance with respect to a ban of land fill in the North.. r

Reference was made to the "Eye on Earth" initiative programme by the EEA, with a pilot on marine litter as a "citizens science' platform" to report on coastal marine litter, similar to an existing activity in the US.

**Action 7** – Pros and cons / set-up of a best-practices guide on Fishing for litter

DG ENV recalled the 3 different methods that exist: fishing for litter by fisherman as by-catch of fishing, paying fishermen to go out and fish for litter and ghost net collection. So far, only a contribution from Seas at Risk was received. Emphasis had to be put on the pros and cons of each method. What was already learned from the second type of fishing for litter is that there is an urgent need to identify hot spots of litter to make a trip to these spots efficient. Also

possible river inputs can be hot spots. (e.g. nets could be placed at river run-offs or water gates/sluices).

#### **Action 8 - PlasticsEurope** to share the results of the Dubai conference of November 2011

PlasticsEurope presented the result of the conference in Dubai where Plastics industry leaders from across the world met this week in Dubai to create a global action plan for solutions on marine litter. It was stressed that the plastic industry is part of the problem and hence part of the solution. The action plan describes actions to be taken and progress to be reported by signatories in 2012. The plastic industry is committed to develop new partnerships and to raise awareness, foster research (GESAMP) & spread knowledge, promote best practices, enhance recovery and prevent pellet loss. Further information to be found under: <http://www.marinelittersolutions.com/default.aspx>

The discussion took off on the possibility of having targets on e.g. 0% landfill of plastics by 2020 and at the same time by increasing recycling rates or use waste for energy recovery, and to promote EU measures for the "end of life" cycle of a product. The importance of the framework from the previous meeting was highlighted again: prevention, production, reduction, remediation and awareness. It was also discussed that focus can be on certain aspects such as littering of on-the-go products (mainly packaging). It should also be recognized that awareness alone is not enough. It is only the start of change the willingness of an individual. And also the effort it will cost this person is thereby key for a real change in behaviour. .

It was further suggested to invite the real product manufacturers (re. green dot) and recyclers to the discussion. Their experience with the use of logo's such the green dot can be used

#### **Action 9** - possible ideas and synergies

No other ideas were received. It was agreed to join efforts in a combined result to present at Rio+20 in 2012.

#### **4. Characteristics of the high-level meeting**

The discussion started with the following questions: what is "high level", who should be invited, what is the appropriate format, which list of actions or options, timing, practical details?

Following this discussion, the group agreed that an 'Event' in the form of a conference would be a appropriate format. It can bring together relevant stakeholders and Member States (including other, possible "observers") to foster cooperation and agree to sign a "declaration of commitment", based on voluntary but ambitious actions that focus on solutions to the problem of marine litter. DG ENV offers to organise PR coverage (press release, website announcements, etc). They will send a proposal for such an Event to be discussed during a next preparatory meeting. After the 'Event' the signed declaration and toolbox with measures could be presented at Rio+20 (20 – 22 June 2012) which also addresses the marine litter topic.

The group agreed to meet at least 1-2 times prior to the "Event".

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Action points that resulted from the discussion

1. For **everybody**: Propose additional stakeholder associations to the group, if necessary. **EuPR** to identify Recyclers' organisations and producers to be invited to the discussion
2. For **everybody**: send additional comments and proposals to Maria and Wim (DG ENV in copy) on "action 2" by 9 December 2011.
3. **EuPR** to propose dates for a visit to (a) recycling plant(s) at the end of January, could possibly be combined with a meeting.
4. **Eurocommerce** and **PlasticsEurope** to report to the group on the outcome of the Retail Forum of 14 December 2011.
5. **Seas at Risk (SAR), EuPR, DG MARE, KIMO, PlasticsEurope** to compile a complete list of clean-up actions, including Member States, local authorities, fisheries sector and industry. For **everybody**: comment on the list circulated by SAR on clean-up activities.
6. **DG MARE, SAR, EuPR** and **Milieu** to evaluate pros and cons of the (3) fishing for litter methods. Result to be disseminated to the group, e.g. when visiting the recycling plant(s).
7. **DG ENV** to draft a proposal for the Event. It will consider an outline of the declaration and associated toolbox of measures.

The following process is proposed:

1. Prepare progress/output per action relevant to your organization before 15<sup>th</sup> February
2. Send a short update to DG ENV (Leo de Vrees: [leo.de-vrees@ec.europa.eu](mailto:leo.de-vrees@ec.europa.eu) and copy to Nicole Wanders-Wengler: [Nicole.Wanders-Wengler@ec.europa.eu](mailto:Nicole.Wanders-Wengler@ec.europa.eu))
3. We aim at having another preparatory meeting end February 2012 in Brussels

The (24) participants included representatives from:

**Industry:** European Plastic Recyclers (EuPR); European Organization for Packaging and the Environment (EUROPEN); European Association of the Plastic Manufacturing Industry (PlasticsEurope); Packaging Recovery Organisation Europe (Pro-Europe); Oxo-biodegradable Plastics Association (OPA)

**Distribution:** European Retail Association (Eurocommerce)

**Harbour and Shipping organisation:** European Cruise Council

**NGOs:** Organisation of Coastal Municipalities (KIMO); Seas at Risk; Surfrider Foundation; European Environmental Bureau (EEB); European Consumers' Organisation (BEUC)

**European Commission:** DG Mare; DG Environment (Waste Unit, Marine Unit plus consultant from Milieu Ltd.); DG Enterprise