



**GESAMP**

Joint Group of Experts on the  
Scientific Aspects of Marine  
Environmental Protection

GESAMP 42/4/2

7 August 2015

ENGLISH ONLY

42nd session

Agenda item 4

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**PLANNING OF GESAMP ACTIVITIES:  
SOURCES, FATE AND EFFECTS OF MICRO-PLASTICS IN THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT –  
A GLOBAL ASSESSMENT**

**Report of the GESAMP Microplastics Working Group (WG 40 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase 2015-2018)**

**Activities of the working group**

1 Two main activities have taken place since the 41st session: i) completion and publication of the results of the first phase of the WG; and ii) initiation of the second phase according to a revised set of Terms of Reference, agreed at the 41st session, and intended, in part, to contribute to the second UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-2). The results have been published in GESAMP Reports & Studies Series No. 90 and in an eight-page brochure, intended to communicate the main messages to policy-makers. The brochure was launched at a side event during the 2nd International Ocean Research Conference in Barcelona, organised by IOC-UNESCO. Both publications have been well received.

2 The second phase of activity of WG 40 was initiated at a workshop in April 2015, hosted by FAO and supported financially by UNEP. Approximately 40 people took part, of which 25 were invited experts representing 18 countries (Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, France, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea (Republic of), Liberia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, UK and USA). Approximately half of the original members of WG 40 continue to be involved. There were a further 12 UN staff (FAO, UNEP, IOC-UNESCO) and 3 observers (ACC, Plastics Europe, Stockholm University). The IMO Basecamp site was used as the prime communication platform both before and during the meeting. The excellent facilities and enthusiastic contributions of staff members greatly enhanced the outcome.

3 The workshop was formally opened by Mr. Lahsen Ababouch (Director Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy & Economics Division, Fisheries & Aquaculture Department). He referred to the work of GESAMP on risk assessment in coastal aquaculture, undertaken on behalf of FAO some years ago, and went on to emphasise the importance of seafood safety from an FAO perspective. The Committee on Fisheries (COFI) has requested FAO to work with partners to reduce pollution. Therefore, the work being undertaken by GESAMP WG 40 can be seen as very relevant to the current FAO mission. In this initial phase the FAO focus is on the impact of microplastics *on* fisheries and aquaculture. In a second phase, post UNEA-2, the focus was likely to expand to include the effects *of* fisheries and aquaculture on the sources and distribution of microplastics.

4 An initial assessment report on microplastics is being prepared by WG40, as part of planned activities up to 2018. A small report-drafting workshop will take place immediately after the 42nd session. This will be utilised in the production of a separate report on marine litter in late 2015 - early 2016, by UNEP, which will be presented at the UNEA-2 in 2016. The progress of planned activities post the UNEA-2 will depend on securing additional funding.

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**Action requested of GESAMP**

5 GESAMP is invited to consider the information provided and take action as appropriate.

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