



PLANNING OF GESAMP ACTIVITIES:

SOURCES, FATE AND EFFECTS OF PLASTICS AND MICRO-PLASTICS IN THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

Report of the Chair of Working Group 40

1 The main achievement of the group in the past twelve months was the publication of the *'Proceedings of the GESAMP international workshop on assessing the risks associated with plastics and microplastics in the marine environment'*, in the GESAMP Reports & Studies Series (No. 103) in early 2020.

2 The ToRs agreed in 2019 require the re-constitution of WG 40 to reflect a different balance of expertise and it had been assumed that at least one face-to face workshop would be needed to initiate the work. Offers of funding for four experts were received from NOAA, United States, (two experts) and the Ministry of Environment of Japan (MoEJ) (two experts). Discussions took place between IOC-UNESCO and potential donor organisations before Christmas 2019 but these have not yet resulted in firm offers of support. Given the current pattern of the Covid-19 pandemic it appears that progress in tackling the ToRs will require a different approach, with greater reliance on virtual meetings.

3 One other development has been the decision to hold a joint WG 38-WG 40 virtual workshop on microplastics in the atmosphere, later in 2020. This is a new area of interest for both working groups and it follows recent revelations in the scientific literature that the relative importance of the phenomenon has been underestimated. Technical support has been offered by WMO for which the chairs of WG 38 and WG 40 are very appreciative. It is envisaged to organise a post-workshop webinar to bring the conclusions of the workshop to a wider audience.

4 The previous work of WG 40 continues to be regarded as a useful source of information by national (e.g. MoEJ Japan), regional (e.g. COBSEA) and international bodies. For example, the 2016 and 2019 reports are extensively cited in a series of case studies under development on *'The analysis of effectiveness of existing and potential response options and activities in contributing towards the long-term elimination of discharge of marine plastic litter and microplastics into the ocean'*. This work is being conducted under the auspices of the Ad hoc Open-ended Expert Group (AHEG) on marine litter and microplastics and the results will be presented at UNEA-5, planned for February 2021.

Action requested of GESAMP

5 GESAMP is invited to note the information provided, and comment as it deems appropriate.