Written submissions prior to OEWG 2: Science-Policy Panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution

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This submission aims to provide input in relating to the preparation of proposals for the establishment of a science-policy panel with the reference to the documents UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/INF/4[1].

It is important to apply a forward-looking approach in establishing the Science-Policy Panel and explore cooperative arrangements with the prospective **global plastics instrument**, which is presently undergoing intergovernmental negotiations. Synergies between the Science-Policy Panel and the plastics instrument would play a significant role in delivering on functions of science-policy interface for plastic pollution.

The recently published report "Science-policy interface for plastic pollution" by GRID-Arendal argues for a multi-faceted approach that enables seamless interlinking of the functions through cooperative arrangements and clear, established roles and responsibilities between the Science-Policy Panel and the plastics instrument. Based on the review of the functions, the report offers recommendations for developing governance arrangements across the four phases of the policy cycle, aiming to improve the sound management of chemicals and waste, and aid in preventing pollution.



The full report is available: https://www.grida.no/publications/1007

This report focuses on the science-policy interface for plastic pollution, which encompasses three main components (**Figure 1**):

[1] UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/INF/5 Background document on the panel's relationships with relevant key stakeholders

1. Internalising science-policy functions and associated governance structures within the plastics instrument, drawing from UNEA Resolution 5/14.
2. Supporting and complementing the science-policy functions of the plastics instrument with those of the Science-Policy Panel on chemicals, waste, and pollution prevention, as specified in UNEA Resolution 5/8.
3. Building complementarity with other science-policy interfaces, especially those within multilateral environmental agreements, to reinforce certain aspects of the science-policy interface of plastic pollution.

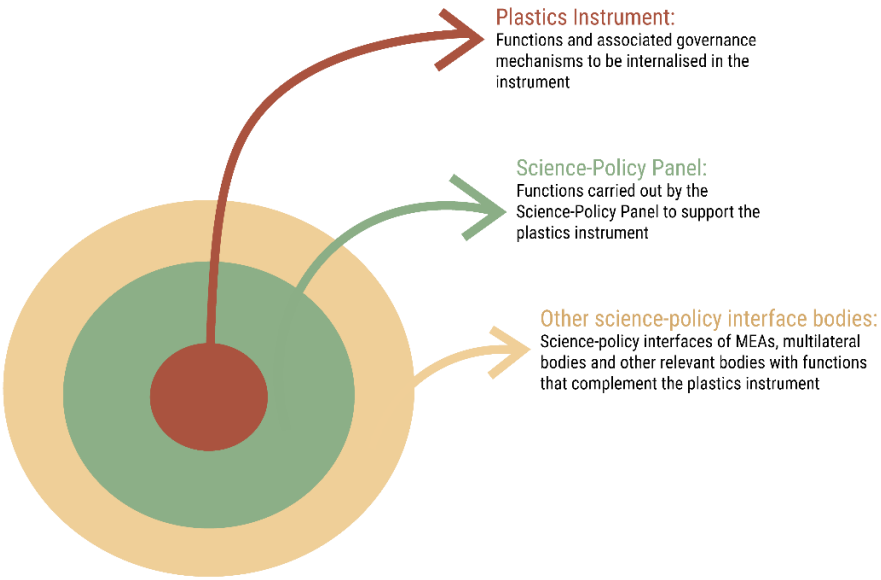


Figure 1: Key components requiring consideration for developing a coherent science-policy interface for plastic pollution.

Based on the analysis of literature and UNEA resolutions, the report looks at ten potential science-policy interface functions for addressing plastic pollution, spanning across the four phases of the policy cycle, while communication and outreach, play cross-cutting role (**Figure 2**).

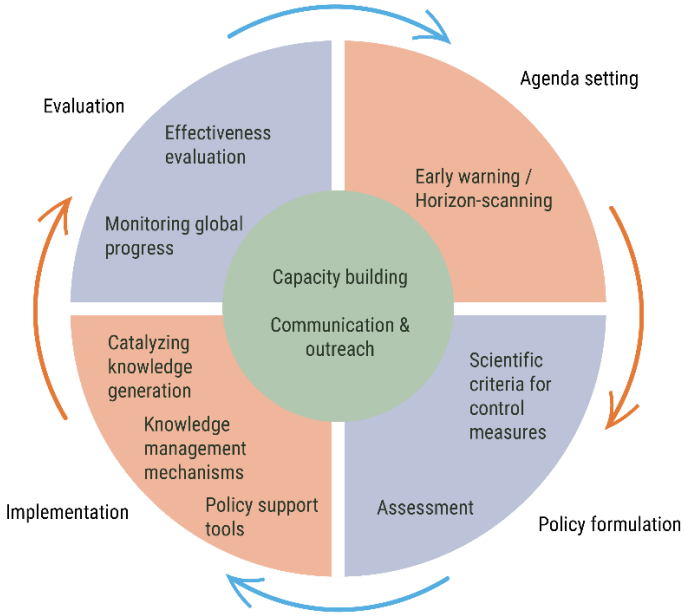


Figure 2: Overview of the ten functions and their alignment with the four phases of the policy cycle

Based on the analysis of UNEA resolutions, the functions' interplay between the Science-Policy Panel and the plastics instrument is illustrated in the **Figure 3**.

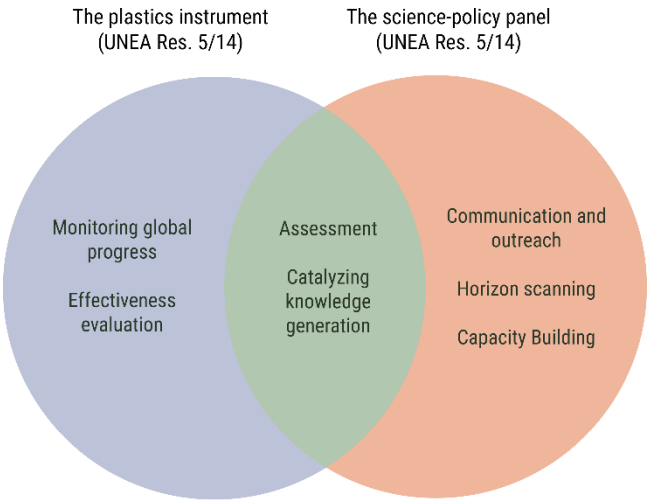


Figure 3: Key scientific and technical functions of the SPI of the plastics instrument and the Science-Policy Panel as per UNEA resolutions and the outcome of the OEWG 1.2 meeting of the Science-Policy Panel.

The report indicates options for the institutional arrangements for the science-policy interface for plastic pollution by covering the functions across the four phases of the policy cycle within the plastics instrument and Science-Policy Panel (**Table 1**).

Policy phase	Functions	UNEA Res. 5/8	UNEA Res. 5/14
Phase 1: Agenda setting	• Early warning	para 2a	
Phase 2: Policy formulation	• Scientific criteria for control measures • Assessment	para 2b	para 3b para 3i
Phase 3: Implementation	• Policy support tools • Knowledge management mechanism • Catalysing knowledge generation	para 2c	para 3o
Phase 4: Evaluation	• Monitoring global progress • Effectiveness evaluation		para 3g para 3h
Cross cutting	• Capacity building • Communication and outreach	OEWG 1.2 para 2c-2d	

Table 1: Summary of how the science-policy interface functions align with the four phases of the policy cycle.

The options include:

Phase 1: Agenda setting

Leveraging capabilities of the plastics instrument and the Science-Policy Panel in the area of horizon scanning: the Science-Policy Panel could submit proposals, grounded in scientific and technical information, for review to a prospective review committee functioning as a subsidiary body of the plastics instrument. This would complement the listing proposals submitted by Parties, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the decision-making process.

Phase 2: Policy formulation

Pursuing the development of global assessments under the Science-Policy Panel should be a priority, given its independent role that will guarantee highest credibility, authority and reach of the global outputs. If this is not feasible, adopting a collaborative approach, spearheaded by the plastics instrument, and incorporating the Science-Policy Panel and other relevant entities, emerges as a sensible strategy.

Phase 3: Implementation

The Science-Policy Panel could spearhead the creation of a comprehensive data repository covering all chemicals and forms of pollution, including plastic pollution.

The Science-Policy Panel could play role in identifying gaps in scientific research pertaining to plastic pollution, including formulating recommendations for directing future research efforts, could involve interdisciplinary studies, monitoring, and innovative technologies.

Cross cutting:

The Science-Policy Panel may take on the role of enhancing the foundational competencies of scientists, representing a comprehensive approach (e.g. fellowship programs).

A possible division of labour between the plastics Instrument and the Science-Policy Panel in delivering the ten core functions summarised in the Table 2.

Category	Functions
1. Functions benefiting from a subsidiary scientific and technical body under the plastics instrument	• Scientific criteria for control measures • Policy support tools
2. Other functions that can be delivered under the plastics instrument (independent of the subsidiary body)	• Monitoring global progress • Effectiveness evaluation
3. Functions that can be delivered under the SPP	• Horizon scanning • Assessment (global assessments)
4. Functions that can be co-delivered under the SPP and plastics instrument (independent of the subsidiary body)	• Assessment (thematic assessments) • Catalyzing knowledge generation • Capacity building • Communication and outreach
5. Functions that can be delivered under the SPP or plastics instrument (independent of the subsidiary body) **depending on the scope**	• Knowledge management mechanism

Table 2: Division of labour between the plastics instrument and the Science-Policy Panel in delivering the ten core functions.

Recommendations to fulfil science-policy interface functions for plastic pollution within the Science-Policy Panel:

- Utilise the horizon scanning capacity of the Science-Policy Panel to proactively identify potential products, polymers and chemicals of concern.
- The Science-Policy Panel could present chemicals, polymers and products of concern emerging from the horizon scanning function for review to the review committee under the plastics instrument. This would complement listing proposals submitted by Parties.
- Primarily pursue the development of iterative global assessments under the Science-Policy Panel to ensure maximum credibility, authority, and reach of the outputs.
- Develop thematic assessments on plastic pollution, based on needs arising from the panel and requests forwarded to the panel from the plastics instrument.
- While not explicitly defined in its mandate, the SPP could assist in developing specific policy support tools, drawing on precedents from bodies such as the IPCC and IPBES.
- Although UNEA Res. 5/8 does not explicitly mention the knowledge management mechanism function, its emphasis on communication and outreach functions presents an opportunity to lead the development of a comprehensive data repository that would encompass all chemicals and pollution forms, including plastic pollution.
- Utilise the Science-Policy Panel's role to identify gaps in scientific research pertaining to plastic pollution, including formulating recommendations for directing future research efforts, which could involve interdisciplinary studies, monitoring, and innovative technologies. This function could be embedded in thematic and global assessments.
- Global assessments conducted under the Science-Policy Panel may also complement and reinforce the effectiveness evaluation of the plastics instrument.
- Take a comprehensive approach to capacity building by enhancing the foundational competencies of scientists, including through fellowship programmes.
- Facilitate involvement of developing country participants to overall work and meetings conducted under the Science-Policy Panel.
- Utilise the dedicated communication and outreach capacity of the Science-Policy Panel to generate greater awareness and ownership of scientific outputs.