

Committee of Permanent Representatives
Subcommittee Meeting
Thursday 23 September 2021
2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. (GMT+3)
Online Meeting

Agenda Item 2: Preparations for a possible draft decision on the GPA.

This document serves as a background note for consideration of Agenda Item 2: Preparations for a possible draft decision on the GPA. It includes a draft decision to be adopted by an Intergovernmental Review Meeting on the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (GPA), reflecting comments from Member States received before and after the CPR Sub-Committee Meeting held on 23 April 2020.

Member States are invited to provide further guidance on the next steps towards a consensual agreement on governance of Washington Programme and on the latest draft IGR decision.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE DRAFT DECISION ON THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW (IGR) OF THE GLOBAL PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT FROM LAND-BASED ACTIVITIES (GPA)

Background

UNEP's work on the protection of the marine environment from land-based activities has been implemented over the years through the [Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities \(GPA\)](#). The GPA, a unique intergovernmental programme born in 1995 after the adoption of the Washington Declaration, aims to tackle land-based sources of marine pollution using a source-to-sea approach.

Pursuant to the Manila Declaration of 2012, the Coordination Office focused its resources on addressing three priority source categories that are strongly interlinked: marine litter, nutrients, and wastewater. Working together with governments, intergovernmental agencies, academia, the private sector and civil society, the Programme hosts three multi-stakeholder partnerships: the [Global Partnership on Marine Litter \(GPML\)](#), the [Global Partnership of Nutrient Management \(GPNM\)](#), and the [Global Wastewater Initiative \(GW²I\)](#).

The GPA has an intergovernmental arrangement with autonomous decision-making processes, which is distinct and independent from the UN system. Any change in the institutional set-up, because of the linkages with the UN system, requires both a general decision by Member States, and the endorsement of the governing bodies of relevant UN organizations. At the [4th Intergovernmental Review Meeting \(IGR4\)](#) of the GPA held in Bali in 2018, representatives of governments and the European Union adopted the Bali Declaration on the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities, and agreed to work on the function, form and future of the Intergovernmental Review Meetings (IGRs).

Consultations were carried out in 2019 and 2020 and government representatives recognized the historical value and the vital importance of the GPA in addressing land-based pollution. However, it was also recognized that the current governance structure of the GPA does no longer serve its purpose. Hence, an analysis of options and alternatives for the Programme and its coordinating mechanism was developed. It includes the discontinuation of the Intergovernmental Review Meetings (IGRs), the continued mainstreaming of the GPA under UNEP's Programme of Work and its Chemicals and Pollution Sub-Programme, and continued support to the three global partnerships on marine litter, nutrient management, and wastewater.

Latest developments on the draft decision

- The Secretariat presented a proposed way forward before the [Committee of Permanent Representatives \(CPR\) subcommittee meeting on 23 January 2020](#).
- A first version of a draft decision was uploaded on the UNEP website for consideration at the [CPR subcommittee meeting of 27 February 2020](#) as well as the [CPR subcommittee meeting of 5 March 2020](#).
- A revised version of the decision was uploaded on UNEP's website for the [CPR subcommittee meeting of 23 April 2020](#). Written comments were received after the CPR.

- A third revised version, taking into account Member States positions shared before and after the subcommittee meeting on 23 April 2020, has been put forward for consideration by Member States at the meeting of the CPR subcommittee on 23 September 2021.

Proposed roadmap for the process leading to the decision

In order to reach a final decision on the IGR, the following roadmap is proposed:

- A final decision will be presented before and adopted during a dedicated Intergovernmental Review Meeting organized prior to the resumed session of the fifth Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives scheduled the week before UNEA 5.2 /21-25 February 2022).
- The CPR will then consider the IGR decision at the resumed 5th Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (21-25 February 2022), in preparation for the elaboration of a short draft UNEA decision/resolution.
- The draft UNEA decision/resolution on the governance of the Programme will be considered for possible endorsement during UNEA 5.2 (28 February – 2 March 2022).
- The outcome will be submitted to the UN General Assembly for endorsement at the 77th session of the General Assembly in 2022 (13 – 27 September 2022).

ANNEX: Third draft version of the IGR decision

ANNEX: Third draft version of the IGR decision - reflecting comments from Member States received before and after the CPR Sub-Committee Meeting held on 23 April 2020

Draft decision to be adopted by an Intergovernmental Review Meeting on the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (GPA)

[Preambular section]

1 Recognizing that maintaining a high-quality coastal and marine environment provides ecosystem functions and services in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in particular Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources);

2 *Recalling* that the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA) was created to counter the impact of land-based activities on the marine environment, and that the GPA was adopted by 109 Governments and the European Commission at an intergovernmental conference convened in Washington, D.C., in 1995¹;

¹ <https://papersmart.unon.org/resolution/uploads/1995-gpa.pdf>

3 *Further recalling* that Intergovernmental Review Meetings of the GPA have been organized in Montreal (2001), Beijing (2006), Manila (2012) and Bali (2018), whereby governments with the participation of stakeholders met to review the status of the implementation of the GPA and decide on the actions to be taken to enhance the GPA and its implementation;

4 *Further recalling* the Bali Declaration¹ on the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities adopted at the Fourth IGR held in Bali, Indonesia, 31 October - 1 November 2018, in which it was agreed to work on the function, form and implications (including legal, budgetary and organizational) of the GPA, including the future of the intergovernmental review process and the work currently coordinated by the Coordination Office of the Global Programme of Action;

5 *Noting with appreciation* the (regional) consultations on the future of the GPA held by the Secretariat in 2019 and 2020, as well as the related briefings to the Committee of Permanent Representatives of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP);

6 *Also noting* with appreciation that UNEP has hosted the GPA Coordination Office since its establishment and the work of the office on preventing land-based sources of marine pollution on the global level through demonstration projects, policy recommendations, research, capacity-building and awareness raising activities, as well as the valuable role of its three global partnerships, the Global Partnership on Marine Litter, the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management, and the Global Wastewater Initiative, for which the GPA Coordination Office provides Secretariat functions;

7 *Recognizing* that the general objectives and activities of the GPA remain relevant to the mission of UNEP and form part of its Medium-Term Strategy and Programme of Work, as well as to several resolutions adopted by the UN Environmental Assembly²;

[Operative section]

1. [1. **Decides** that consideration of further meetings of the periodic Intergovernmental Review (IGR) of the Global Programme of Action should be postponed, as the Global Programme of Action may be considered by the fifth meeting of UNEA as one of the response options to address marine plastic litter and microplastics.] (USA reserve)

2. **Recognizes** the continued relevance and valuable role of the GPA and its three global partnerships in tackling land-based pollution, namely the Global Partnership on Marine Litter, the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management and the Global Wastewater Initiative, as tools that contribute to the implementation of the relevant SDG targets, including SDG 6.3 and SDG 14.1, and in particular SDG target 6.a, and calls upon all Member States, relevant organizations of the United Nations system, other relevant regional and international organizations, the private sector, the academia, civil society, nongovernmental organizations, individuals, and other relevant stakeholders to support its activities;

¹ <https://papersmart.unon.org/igr-meeting/sites/default/files/k1900652.pdf#overlay-context=working-docs>

² Marine plastic debris and microplastics (UNEP/EA.1/Res.6); Oceans and seas (UNEP/EA.2/Res.10); Marine plastic litter and microplastics (UNEP/EA.2/Res.11); Sustainable coral reefs management (UNEP/EA.2/Res.12); Environment and health (UNEP/EA.3/Res.4); Managing soil pollution to achieve sustainable development (UNEP/EA.3/Res.6); Marine litter and microplastics (UNEP/EA.3/Res.7); Preventing and reducing air pollution to improve air quality globally (UNEP/EA.3/Res.8); Addressing water pollution to protect and restore water-related ecosystems

3. **Invites** the Executive Director of UNEP, as appropriate and subject to available resources, to continue to support the general objectives of the GPA as well as its three partnerships and in tackling land-based pollution within the framework of the UNEP Programme of Work and Budget and to maintain and strengthen UNEP's capacity to support Member States in implementing and reporting on national, regional and global programmes to address land-based sources of marine pollution;

4. **Invites** the UN Environment Assembly to continue to review the progress on the prevention of land-based sources of marine pollution in the context of the implementation of UNEP's Programme of Work and Budget and where relevant to consider the results of scientific assessments and reports on, when relevant, emerging issues that contribute to achieve high-quality coastal and marine environments **in line with the partnerships' program of work and operational frameworks;**

5 **Invites** the UN Environment Assembly at its fifth session to take note of this decision and to include it in its report to the UN General Assembly.

(UNEP/EA.3/Res.10); **Marine plastic litter and microplastics (UNEP/EA.4/Res.6); Protection of the marine environment from land-based activities (UNEP/EA.4/Res.11); Sustainable nitrogen management (UNEP/EA.4/Res.14); and Implementation Plan "Towards a Pollution-free Planet" (UNEP/EA.4/Res.21)**