

12. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The global bodies focused on here are those that have a particular interest in pollution from marine plastic and have been reviewed in this section. These bodies, their corresponding instruments and actions form specialised functional regimes linked to their mandate. To better understand their work, these regimes can be grouped according to their focus area (upstream or downstream research on pollution from marine plastics) and whether they adopt binding or non-binding legal norms and policy directions. See Figure 1.3.12.1. This figure shows that only three specialised regimes have as of now mechanisms on pollution from marine plastics to adopt mandatory rules: the IMO, BSR, and the LC/LP. It also highlights a weakness of the UNEA/UNEP regime despite the fact that it also benefits from the most general mandate to deal with all aspects of pollution from marine plastics.

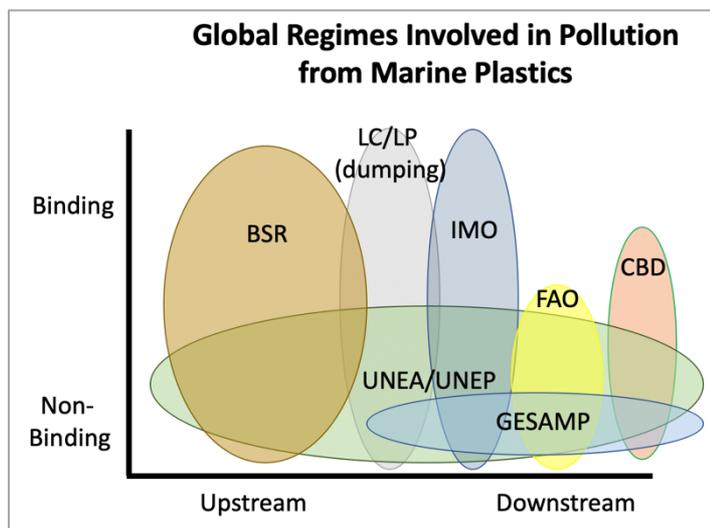


Figure 1.3.12.1. Global regimes involved in pollution from marine plastics.

Table 1.3.12.2 below shows a comparative analysis of research interest by these six global regimes that have had a particular interest in marine plastic pollution. The denomination of 'regime' is used to designate a group of institutions that are institutionally connected and work jointly under the auspices of at least one intergovernmental body. Such regimes can include one or several (related) intergovernmental bodies, bodies of international organisations and their initiatives or programmes. The comparison focuses on the bodies which have been the most active on this topic, have adopted specific and substantive response strategies, have a policy mandate or have provided documents to support the development of guidelines to respond to this pollution threat (e.g. GESAMP).

Three of these regimes stand out with interests in the most research topics considered: (i) UNEA and UNEP; (ii) the LC/LP, the body in charge of regulating disposal of waste at sea; and (iii) GESAMP, a UN research body. Of note, ASEAN member states are members of UNEP and its work on marine plastics. BY contrast, LC/LP meetings, which also have an important interest in marine plastics and have been assessing issues raised by marine plastics for more than 10 years, are generally attended only by the Philippines. Finally, GESAMP has carried out several of the authoritative studies that provide guidance to response to pollution from marine plastic. Importantly however, whilst GESAMP can publish advisory guidelines, these guidelines are not policy unless they are endorsed by a policy body.

The fact that the other international bodies show a limited interest in some of the research topics can be explained by the specialisation of their mandate relating to particular aspects of marine plastics and sources of plastic pollution.

Nevertheless, two substantive topics stand out as research priorities on the basis that they are highlighted or covered implicitly by all of the seven bodies:

- Ecological and environment impact; and
- Organic and inorganic contaminants associated with plastic debris.

The two research topics that follow are:

- Socio-economic impact; and
- Contribution from fisheries.

An additional point emphasised by most of the global intergovernmental bodies reviewed in this section (and not identified in Table 1.3.12.2) is the importance of a risk approach to identifying priorities and determining research agenda to respond to pollution from marine plastics.

Table 1.3.12.2. Comparison of research focus by international intergovernmental bodies.

Legend: Red = no research or interest expressed; Light-green = expressed or inferred interest; Dark-green = active or proposed research.

Research Focus	GESAMP	IMO (Shipping)	LC/LP (Dumping)	BSR (Hazardous/toxic waste)	UNEA/GPA/UNEP/GPML/Clean Seas	FAO	CBD
Policy, laws, adm. measures, action plans, guidelines	Dark-green	Dark-green	Dark-green	Dark-green	Dark-green	Dark-green	Light-green
Upstream research/waste management	Red	Red	Dark-green	Dark-green	Dark-green	Red	Red
Methodology for monitoring of marine plastic litter, survey and monitoring, pollution status	Dark-green	Red	Dark-green	Red	Light-green	Dark-green	Light-green
Accumulation zones & hotspots	Dark-green	Light-green	Dark-green	Red	Dark-green	Red	Light-green
Contribution from rivers	Dark-green	Red	Light-green	Red	Light-green	Red	Red
Source differentiation	Dark-green	Dark-green	Dark-green	Red	Light-green	Red	Light-green
Discharge from offshore infrastructures (incl. aquaculture)	Dark-green	Light-green	Dark-green	Red	Light-green	Red	Red
Contribution of fisheries/lost and abandoned fishing gear	Dark-green	Light-green	Dark-green	Red	Light-green	Dark-green	Light-green
Fragmentation and degradation	Dark-green	Red	Dark-green	Red	Light-green	Light-green	Light-green
Ecological and environmental impact	Dark-green	Light-green	Dark-green	Light-green	Light-green	Light-green	Light-green
Socio-economic impact	Red	Light-green	Dark-green	Light-green	Light-green	Light-green	Light-green
Public outreach/beach clean-up, social perception	Dark-green	Red	Red	Red	Dark-green	Red	Red
Organic/inorganic contaminants associated with plastic pollutants	Dark-green	Dark-green	Dark-green	Dark-green	Dark-green	Dark-green	Light-green
Port reception facilities	Red	Dark-green	Dark-green	Red	Light-green	Red	Red
Fibreglass-reinforced plastic vessels	Dark-green	Red	Dark-green	Red	Red	Red	Red
Hull scraping and marine coating	Dark-green	Red	Dark-green	Red	Red	Red	Red