

5. ASIA-PACIFIC ECONOMIC COOPERATION (APEC)

Summary of role: *The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) is a multilateral trade and economic dialogue forum. It is not intended to formulate binding commitments or treaty obligations. However, guidelines or manuals could be developed by working groups*

Summary of work: *Numerous projects and workshops have been sponsored and organised by APEC member states on the topic of pollution from marine plastic debris. In 2014, the Xiamen Declaration which encouraged cooperation on the reduction and mitigation of marine pollution, including from land-based sources resulted in the establishment of Virtual Working Group on Sustainable Material Management and Innovative Solutions to the Problem of Marine Debris. In 2019, APEC adopted the 2019 Roadmap on Marine Debris.*

Keywords/research fields: *Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation; APEC; function and mandate; Projects; Events; Roadmap on Marine Debris; Xiamen Declaration; Virtual Working Group on Sustainable Material Management and Innovative Solutions to the Problem of Marine Debris (VWG); APEC Workshop on Innovative Marine Debris Solutions; Capacity Building; Compendium of Preventive Measures and Policies; Understanding and Addressing Marine Debris Impact in the APEC Region; Capacity Building on Global Marine Debris Monitoring and Modeling: Supports Protection of the Marine Environment; APEC Marine Debris Management Guidelines; APEC Workshop on Marine Debris and Microplastics; Report on Economic Costs of Marine Debris to APEC Region*

5.1 Function and mandate

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) began as an informal ministerial-level dialogue in 1989. Over time it has undergone some limited formalisation and institutionalisation, but continues to exist as a multilateral trade and economic dialogue forum that does not create binding commitments or treaty obligations. However, guidelines can be developed by working groups or otherwise, and endorsed at different levels.

There are currently 21 members who use APEC as a forum for cooperation, based on consensus through working groups and capacity building projects. Works relating to the protection of the marine environment against plastic pollution are currently carried out under two mechanisms: the Oceans and Fisheries Working Group (OFWG) and the Chemical Dialogue.

5.2 APEC Roadmap on Marine Debris

The APEC Roadmap on Marine Debris was adopted in Chile in August 2019 by the Third Senior Officials' Meeting. It followed on a 2014 Xiamen Declaration which encouraged cooperation on the reduction and mitigation of marine pollution, including from land-based sources. Available:

https://www.apec.org/Meeting-Papers/Annual-Ministerial-Meetings/2019/2019_AMM/Annex-B.

This Roadmap emphasises four areas of cooperation and coordination for the purpose of combating pollution from marine debris:

- (i) Policy development, including cross-fora dialogue relevant to APEC region and waste management;
- (ii) Capacity building, including cross-fora collaboration;
- (iii) Research and innovation, including knowledge sharing; and
- (iv) Financing and private sector engagement.

In 2014, the Virtual Working Group on Sustainable Material Management and Innovative Solutions to the Problem of Marine Debris (VGW) was established to bring together the OFWG and the Chemical Dialogue on marine debris. The Terms of Reference of the VGW was endorsed in 2015. The VWG emphasises waste management objectives. See: http://mddb.apec.org/Documents/2015/OFWG/OFWG2/15_ofwg2_025.pdf.

The APEC Marine Debris Stakeholder Meeting on Improving Data and Coordination and Developing New Partnership was held on 2–3 November 2018 in Bali, Indonesia. The meeting’s report does not appear to be available online.

5.3 Past projects and events

APEC countries have organised a number of APEC-workshops and sponsored projects on the topic of marine debris, including plastic, which can be tracked in APEC’s project database. A selection is provided below:

- APEC Workshop on Innovative Marine Debris Solutions held in 2018 to follow up on the 2017 Workshop on Best Practices Sharing on Marine Debris Management in Coastal Cities of APEC Region (see below) to encourage continuous involvement and accelerate the marine debris solution. Available: <https://aimp2.apec.org/sites/PDB/Lists/Proposals/DispForm.aspx?ID=2164>.
- Project on Capacity Building for Marine Debris Prevention and Management in the APEC Region (Phase 2 – Implementation of Advanced Marine Debris Management Policies). This project was implemented in 2017–2018 to (i) develop training standards and public awareness materials; (ii) develop marine debris guideline/manual in the APEC region, and (iii) establish a regional network between participants and experts for continued collaboration. Of note, representatives from other regional intergovernmental bodies and NGOs were also invited (these include NOWPAP RCU, ASEAN Secretariat, World Bank and Ocean Conservancy). Whilst the project description includes an intention to develop APEC Marine Debris Management Guidelines, no such guidelines have been published yet. Available: <https://aimp2.apec.org/sites/PDB/Lists/Proposals/DispForm.aspx?ID=2097>.
- Study on the Origin and Distribution of Microplastics in Typical and Marine APEC Region. The project was planned to be undertaken during 2017–2019 to investigate the source and

distribution of microplastics in the APEC region, especially in China. No report is available on the website at this stage. Available: <https://aimp2.apec.org/sites/PDB/Lists/Proposals/DispForm.aspx?ID=2086>.

- The APEC High Level Meeting on Overcoming Barriers to Financing Waste Management Systems to Prevent Marine Litter in the Asia Pacific Region was hosted in Lima, Peru on 14–15 November 2016 to examine ways of overcoming barriers to financing municipal solid waste systems in developing economies. APEC endorsed the Policy and Practice recommendations to overcome barriers to the financing of waste management projects in the APEC region. Available: https://www.apec.org/Press/News-Releases/2017/0406_Oceans.
- A project on Capacity Building for Marine Debris Prevention and Management in the APEC Region (Phase 1: 2016–2017) aimed at raising awareness and attention of the APEC economies, especially those from developing economies, through information sharing, policy formulation, social and economic impact analysis and technical training on marine debris. Available: <https://aimp2.apec.org/sites/PDB/Lists/Proposals/DispForm.aspx?ID=1819>.

5.4 Ongoing work

The 13 relevant projects implemented or being implemented so far shows APEC's particular concern with the issue of pollution from marine plastics in the APEC region.

Ongoing efforts and projects that are still in progress are difficult to track. However, some are mentioned on APEC's website and/or are known to the authors. A selection of the most notable ones at the scale of the region is set out below:

- The publication of a Compendium of Preventive Measures and Policies that APEC Economies are Taking to Reduce Land-Based Marine Debris was proposed by Chile in 2019 to produce a compendium of existing instruments in APEC economies that monitor, evaluate and control land-based sources of waste which contribute to marine debris. Available: <https://aimp2.apec.org/sites/PDB/Lists/Proposals/DispForm.aspx?ID=2378>.
- The Workshop on Understanding and Addressing Marine Debris Impact in the APEC Region was proposed by the USA and Chile in 2019. Available: <https://aimp2.apec.org/sites/PDB/Lists/Proposals/DispForm.aspx?ID=2391>.
- The Project on Capacity Building on Global Marine Debris Monitoring and Modelling: Supports Protection of the Marine Environment was proposed by Indonesia in 2019. The objective is the harmonization of global monitoring tools and systems for marine debris that will support implementation of recommendations formulated in APEC's context and a more cost-effective reduction of marine debris and their impacts. Available: <https://aimp2.apec.org/sites/PDB/Lists/Proposals/DispForm.aspx?ID=2439>.

- Draft APEC Marine Debris Management Guidelines, developed under the project, Capacity Building for Marine Debris Prevention and Management in the APEC Region (Phase 2 – Implementation of Advanced Marine Debris Management Policies) mentioned above. Whilst a draft appears to have circulated, the documents from the 12th APEC OFWG held in Chile do not. The future of this work is unclear at this point.
- The APEC Workshop on Marine Debris and Microplastics: Blue Citizenship was proposed by China in 2019 to raise public awareness and share progress made by APEC economies in addressing marine debris and microplastics. Available: <https://aimp2.apec.org/sites/PDB/Lists/Proposals/DispForm.aspx?ID=2450>.
- An Update of the 2009 APEC Report on Economic Costs of Marine Debris to APEC Region project was proposed by the USA in 2018 to include the findings of the 2017–2019 project on Understanding the Economic Benefits and Costs of Controlling Marine Debris in the APEC Region. The 2009 APEC Report on Economic Costs estimated the costs of marine plastic pollution to tourism, fishing, and shipping industries in APEC to \$1.3 billion. Available: <https://aimp2.apec.org/sites/PDB/Lists/Proposals/DispForm.aspx?ID=2229>.