

8. IOC-WESTPAC

Summary of role: *The Sub-commission for the Western Pacific of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, a UN body (IOC-WESTPAC), is in charge of promoting international cooperation and coordinating programmes in marine research, ocean observations and services, as well as capacity building in the Western Pacific and adjacent seas.*

Summary of work: *The IOC-WESTPAC has an ongoing project on the distribution, source, fate and impacts of marine microplastics.*

Keywords/research fields: *IOC-WESTPAC; function and mandate; projects; events; distribution; source; fate and impacts of marine microplastics; WESTPAC Workshop on Distribution; Source; Fate and Impacts of Marine Microplastics; International Symposium on Marine Microplastic Pollution and Control; Training Workshop*

8.1 Function and mandate

The Sub-commission for the Western Pacific of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, a UN body (IOC-WESTPAC) was established in 1989 to promote international cooperation and to coordinate programmes in marine research, ocean observations and services, as well as capacity building in the Western Pacific and adjacent seas, in order to learn more about the nature and resources of the ocean and coastal areas and to apply that knowledge for the improvement of governance, sustainable development and protection of the marine environment. It comprises 22 states including those of Southeast Asia.

The IOC is the intergovernmental organisation with competence in marine science at the global level, within the UN system. The IOC-WESTPAC being the regional arm for the Western Pacific. At the global level, the IOC focuses on marine litter including marine plastics. It has commissioned several reports on the topic including the 2009 Guidelines on Survey and Monitoring of Marine Litter.

In this context, the IOC supports the UNEP Clean Seas campaign and is a sponsor of GESAMP. Available: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/ioc-oceans/focus-areas/rio-20-ocean/blueprint-for-the-future-we-want/marine-pollution/>.

The 12th Intergovernmental Session of IOC-WESTPAC took place on 2–5 April 2019 in Manila, Philippines.

8.2 Work on marine plastics

The IOC-WESTPAC has an ongoing project on the distribution, source, fate and impacts of marine microplastics in the WESTPAC (Asia Pacific region). See: <http://file.iocwestpac.org/WESTPAC-XII/meeting%20docs/pdf/XII-8-16%20Microplastics.pdf>.

It includes three research areas:

- (i) Investigation of sampling and analysis of methodologies for microplastics
- (ii) Distribution, source, transportation and fate of microplastics in the marine environment
- (iii) Effects of microplastics on marine ecosystems

From this project, guidelines for methodology are under development. The principal investigator on this project is the East China Normal University. The Programme Steering Group includes East China Normal University, China; Korea Institute of Ocean Science and Technology, Indonesian Institute of Sciences, Indonesia; Huahong Shi, Phuket Marine Biological Center, Thailand; State Oceanic Administration No.1 Ocean Institute, China; and the Institute of Oceanography and Environment (INOS), University Malaysia Terengganu, Malaysia.

8.3 Events

On 6–8 November 2019, the 3rd WESTPAC Workshop on Distribution, Source, Fate and Impacts of Marine Microplastics in Asia and the Pacific was held in Shanghai, China. Available: <http://iocwestpac.org/calendar/917.html>.

On 15–17 October 2018, the IOC-WESTPAC Workshop on Distribution, Source, Fate and Impacts of Marine Microplastics in Asia and the Pacific was held in Shanghai, China. Available: <http://iocwestpac.org/calendar/882.html>.

The 2nd International Symposium on Marine Microplastic Pollution and Control was held in Shanghai, China on 24–25 April 2018. Available: <http://ismp.ecnu.edu.cn/>.

A side event on ‘Research on Marine Debris, including Plastics and Microplastics’, was held at the ‘ASEAN Conference on Reducing Marine Debris in ASEAN Region’ in Phuket, Thailand on 22–23 November 2017. Available: <http://iocwestpac.org/calendar/851.html>.

In 2017, the IOC-WESTPAC Training Workshop on Distribution, Source, Fate and Impacts of Marine Microplastics in Asia and the Pacific was held in Phuket, Thailand. This event was hosted by the Thai Department of Marine and Coastal Resources, Phuket Marine Biological Center, together with East China Normal University. It covered the following main themes: global and regional status of microplastic research, monitoring and management; national and/or institutional status of microplastic research, monitoring and management; and developing a joint-monitoring plan on microplastic research, monitoring and management in the Western Pacific. The Workshop saw the participation of more than 50 experts from 10 countries in the region. They reviewed the current status of plastics and

microplastics pollution at global, regional, and local level, as well as attempted to harmonise protocols in sampling and analysing microplastics in beach, surface water, and marine biota. Country reports from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam were made available online. Available: <http://iocwestpac.org/calendar/834.html> and <http://iocwestpac.org/calendar/834.html>.