

2.3 Relevant ASEAN working groups and centres

According to ASEAN's institutional organisation, the numerous ASEAN technical working groups and activity centres work on issues pertaining to a sector of activity within their mandate and make recommendations to higher bodies in the governmental hierarchy, within their pillar. There are at least six working groups and two activity centres which deal with marine and maritime issues, including issues of marine plastics. (See [Chart 1](#).) Another relevant working group which is not included in this analysis because it does not deal with coastal and marine issues is the ASEAN Working Group on Water (AWGW). However, it is a key stakeholder on river management issues. It is also the ASEAN body named as taking part in the Integrated River Basin Management Initiative jointly developed by PEMSEA, UNDP, ADB, GEF and the ASEAN (AWGW) which focuses on plastic debris taken by rivers to their mouth and into the sea.

Participation in ASEAN working group meetings is not open to the public. The meeting agendas and meeting reports are often not published. However, some of their work is made public. These are highlighted below.

2.3.1 ASEAN Working Group on Coastal and Marine Environment (AWGCME)

The AWGCME is the main body dealing with coastal and marine environment issues within ASEAN. Its functions are to ensure that ASEAN's coastal and marine environment are sustainably managed and that its representative ecosystems, pristine areas and species are protected. The next meeting of the AWGCME (21st Meeting), which was planned for June 2020, has been postponed due to Covid-19 crisis. Marine debris including plastics were discussed at the previous meeting as summarised below.

- 20th Meeting of AWGCME, 29–30 January 2019 in Phuket, Thailand, which focused on marine debris. Projects discussed included:
 - E-READI Project on Circular Economy
 - ASEAN-Norway Proposal on Regional Capacity Building of Reducing Plastic Pollution
 - ASEAN CSR Network Proposal on Multi-Stakeholder Partnership to Tackle Marine Plastic
 - Japan's support to combat marine debris
 - NOAA's potential collaboration with ASEAN on marine debris
 - ADF's (Dc Fatiha Association) potential collaboration with ASEAN on marine debris. ADF is an active organisation on marine debris in the Mediterranean region.

See: <http://www.pcd.go.th/file/17-01-62-01.pdf>.

- 19th Meeting of AWGCME, October 2018 in Bali, Indonesia, which reviewed the current state of packaging value chains and packaging waste management in Southeast Asia, including their contribution to marine pollution in the region.

2.3.2 ASEAN Working Group on Chemicals and Waste (AWGCW)

This body was established to serve as a consultative platform among ASEAN member states to further strengthen regional coordination and cooperation in addressing chemicals-related issues under relevant multilateral environmental agreements such as the Basel Convention, the Rotterdam Convention, the Stockholm Convention (see [Part 1, Section 3.7](#) above on the work done under these Conventions), and the Minamata Convention on Mercury. The 4th Meeting of AWGCW was held on 14–15 May 2019 in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

Whilst little information is available online on the work of the AWGCW, a relevant report from 2017 is available online: Regional Programme Towards a Non-Toxic Environment in South-East Asia – Phase II (<https://www.kemi.se/en/files/96b822bbbfe745deb349438afa289238/progress-report-2017.pdf>).

Given the push from UNEP (see: <https://www.informea.org/sites/default/files/imported-documents/UNEP-CHW-LEAFLET-PUB-Brochure-MarineLitter-2018.English.pdf>) and the ongoing discussions at the global level on the regulation of plastic and microplastic through the Basel and the Stockholm Conventions (see: <http://www.basel.int/Implementation/MarinePlasticLitterandMicroplastics/Overview/tabid/6068/Default.aspx>), ASEAN projects and discussions on marine plastic are likely to extend more substantially to the AWGCW, if it is not already the case. Of note, some polymers are already listed under the Basel Convention and some plastic-associated contaminants (additives and adsorbed substances) are listed under the Stockholm Convention. Furthermore, all ASEAN member states are a party to these Conventions. For more details on these Conventions, see [Part 1, Section 3.7](#) above.

2.3.3 ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB)

Pollution from marine plastic has become an important item on the ASEAN agenda and the ACB is in the right position to be a driver or repository of research on the impact of marine plastics on marine biodiversity. ACB's Director is clear on this topic.

However, the only visible project devoted to the issue, and is (partly) under their responsibility, is a joint project on marine litter with PEMSEA in the context of the September 2018 Letter of Cooperation between the two bodies. See: <http://www.pemsea.org/news/pemsea-and-acb-sign-letter-cooperation>.