

III.PROTECTION OF OCEANS AND SEAS

Sub – Program – Marine Plastic Pollution

Justification

Plastic pollution poses a pervasive challenge that has far-reaching consequences for the marine environment. It jeopardizes the well-being of marine species, compromises food safety and quality, impacts human health, undermines coastal tourism, and contributes to climate change. Plastic, being an exceptionally durable material, can persist in the environment for hundreds of years, and there is growing evidence that it may not even fully degrade but instead breaks down into microplastics.

Plastic waste accounts for a staggering 80% of all marine pollution, with an estimated 8 to 10 million metric tons of plastic finding its way into the ocean annually. Research indicates that by 2050, the mass of plastic in the sea could surpass that of all fish combined. The consequences of plastic pollution on marine life and ecosystems are devastating, including suffocation, entanglement, laceration, infections, and internal injuries that result from animals interacting with or consuming plastic items.

Pacific countries have demonstrated commendable leadership in addressing marine plastic pollution. The leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum have acknowledged the significance of waste management, particularly the issue of marine and plastic pollution.

The UNEA Resolution, adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly on March 2, 2022, titled 'End Plastic Pollution: Towards a legally binding instrument,' establishes an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee tasked with developing the specific content of a new plastic pollution treaty, aiming to conclude its work by the end of 2024.

The second session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment (INC-2), took place from May 29 to June 2, 2023, at the headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris, France.

Hence, the scope of this partnership is expanding to encompass projects and initiatives that:

- Promote effective waste management strategies and recycling programs to reduce the amount of plastic waste generated and prevent its entry into the marine environment.
- Enhance public awareness and education campaigns to encourage responsible consumption and the proper disposal of plastic products.
- Support the implementation of policies and regulations that promote the reduction, reuse, and recycling of plastic materials.
- Facilitate international cooperation and knowledge-sharing to address the global issue of plastic pollution and its impact on the marine environment.
- Collaborate with stakeholders from various sectors, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, academia, and industry, to collectively work towards finding comprehensive solutions to plastic pollution.
- Advocate for the inclusion of plastic pollution reduction targets and measures in international agreements and frameworks.
- Monitor and assess the effectiveness of implemented measures and adjust strategies accordingly to achieve tangible and measurable results in reducing plastic pollution in the marine environment.