



GEF Consultations with Civil Society

Plastic Pollution: How Do We Tame This Menace?

Solutions from CSOs, government and the private sector

Monday June 10, 2019

14:00-17:00

Preston Auditorium, World Bank

1818 H St, NW, Washington, DC USA

Concept Note

Context of Session

At its 55th meeting in December 2018, the GEF Council selected the topic of *plastics management to avoid pollution* to be discussed at the GEF Consultations with Civil Society on Monday, June 10, 2019, the day preceding the 56th Council meeting. These Consultations are organized by the GEF Secretariat in collaboration with the CSO Network, the GEF Small Grants Programme and the Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group (IPAG). It aims to provide Council with the opportunity to engage with civil society organizations, community-based organizations and experts in a dialogue about opportunities to contribute to solutions to plastic waste.

Plastics: Challenges & Solutions

Plastic pollution has become a major threat to the global environment. Approximately 8 – 13 million tons of plastic enter our oceans every year, the equivalent of one garbage truck full of plastic dumped into the ocean each minute. Marine plastics are injuring wildlife, littering our beaches, landscapes and cities and degrading freshwater ecosystems. Plastic production and disposal processes also contribute to greenhouse gas emissions as well as air, land and soil chemical pollution. As a result, plastic pollution threatens not only ocean health, but also adversely affects food safety and quality, human health and coastal tourism, and contributes to climate change.

The solution to this global problem requires large scale actions through active commitment of governments, civil society organizations and the private sector to eliminate plastics that do not serve a purpose (e.g. plastic straws), improve collection and waste management systems, and promote innovative alternatives. These solutions require addressing the entire plastic value cycle: material engineering, product and process design, consumer use and behavior, and waste collection and recycling systems. This circular economy approach to plastics not only reduces marine debris but it also reduces greenhouse gas emissions through reduced fossil fuel extraction, reduces hazardous chemical emissions through both improved end-of-life practices to capture and properly dispose of these substances, and reduces hazardous chemical emissions through redesigned materials and products.



Plastics has gained global attention and catalyzed action by public and private sectors at local to global scales. In Asia, which supplies over 50% of plastic pollution globally, the ASEAN members are finalizing a Framework of Action on Marine Debris. At the national level, the Indonesian government developed a *National Plan of Action for Marine Plastic Debris Management* and have pledged US\$1 billion to curb ocean waste by 70% by 2025 while Rwanda was one of the first nations to take the bold step of banning plastic bags. Meanwhile an increasing number of governments are moving toward levies and/or bans of single-use plastic products, including Chile, China, Colombia, France, Kenya, Marshall Islands, South Africa and Vietnam (to name a few) as a first step toward wider plastic ‘rethink’ policies and incentives. Multilateral initiatives are also supporting these government efforts, such as the United Nations Environment Programme through its Beat the Pollution and CleanSeas campaign. Multilateral development banks, including World Bank and Asia Development Bank, are also pursuing investment opportunities to address marine plastics.

Increasingly businesses are catalyzing change from within as evidenced by the announcement of 11 leading brands, retailers, and packaging companies, including Unilever, Coca-Cola and Ikea, to work towards 100% reusable, recyclable, or compostable packaging by 2025 through the New Plastic Economy initiative. Recognizing plastics as both a challenge and an opportunity, small and medium enterprises are growing in the areas of alternative materials (e.g. seaweed based), redesign (e.g. disposable plastic bottles with attached caps), consumer use (e.g. shared coffee cup systems) and recycling facilities (e.g. improved sorting technology for home and commercial use).

Civil society organizations at local to global scales also play a critical role in furthering efforts to eliminate marine plastic. Global environmental NGOs, such as Ocean Conservancy and Plastic Pollution Coalition, have been critical in raising the alarm on plastics at various global fora while community-based organizations, such the Women Initiative Gambia, which is promoting plastic recycling and women empowerment, are catalyzing local change.

The world is witnessing an unprecedented opportunity to address this issue for the betterment of the environment, society and the economy. Clearly in this global phenomenon requiring local action, all actors play a critical role in contributing to the solutions. Understanding the role these players play is fundamental to transitioning from a take-make-waste global economy toward closed loop production and consumption for a sustainable economy.

Purpose of Session

This event is a unique opportunity to highlight the critical role of CSOs in addressing plastic pollution in collaboration with governments and businesses. Emphasis will be on addressing the entire lifecycle of plastics, including product material and design, consumer use and behavior, and waste collection and recycling systems.

The objectives of the dialogue are to:

- highlight the latest thinking on plastic solutions, particularly the need to stem the flow of mass production and consumption inherent in a take-make-waste, linear economy by reducing demand and shifting to reusable and recyclable plastic products;
- discuss the role of public-private-CSOs partnerships; and,
- explore real solutions and best practices that governments, businesses and CSOs can undertake toward a circular economy of closed loop production and consumption.

Format for Session

The session will bring practical examples of plastic management around the world conducted by CSOs, indigenous peoples and local communities, including SGP grantees, and executors of GEF projects and other similar projects. It will also engage the participation of international NGOs, experts, government and private sector in an interactive dialogue with the audience. The dialogue will feature practical experiences and lessons learned regarding the production, consumption and waste management of plastics and opportunities to engage with the public and private sectors in contributing to the solution at different stages of the plastics cycle. These solutions require addressing the entire plastic value cycle: material engineering, product and process design, consumer use and behavior, and waste collection and recycling systems.

There will be a keynote speaker and a panel composed by CSOs, government representatives and private sector, who will set the stage for the discussion. Participants will then be organized around 3 tables, depicting the different phases of the plastics life cycle: 1) product materials and design for production; 2) consumer use; and, 3) waste collection and recycling. Each table will have an expert lead and a resources person as well as a facilitator to guide the discussion. Each table will discuss a series of questions. Participants will rotate among the tables after 20 minutes of discussion. At the end of the discussion (around 90 minutes) each table lead will report back to the plenary with key messages.