International coalition to reduce plastic bags pollution

Briefing note

Reminder of the coalition goals

The coalition brings together local and national governments. It aims at promoting the reduction of plastic waste pollution of the oceans and in particular the elimination of single-use plastic bags in all countries. The members of the coalition take the commitment to promote, in particular, elimination of these plastic bags in a consistent manner with existing international instruments and policies, and to share experience gained by States that already take action on this matter.

The coalition also aims at:
- coordinating and strengthening actions already undertaken at national and sub-national levels and also under conventions or international agreements related to the fight against plastic waste pollution of the seas;
- and contributing to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (2030 Agenda) adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in September 2015, and more particularly goals 12 and 14.

Genesis of the coalition

The coalition is based on the following observation: the concentration of plastic waste has led to the creation of a real 7th continent, which could become as large as Europe in 20 years, if no action is taken. Combating plastic waste starts by reducing the use of plastic bags. Used only once time and produced from hydrocarbons which generate greenhouse gases, they pollute the land, rivers and then the seas, and they have become the symbol of a model of non-sustainable production and consumption.

Initially proposed by France, together with Monaco and Morocco, during the "Our Ocean" conference in September 2016 in Washington, the coalition quickly raised interest among several countries. Then, the initiative was formally launched during COP 22 in Marrakesh on November 14, 2016. During this event, all countries have been invited to formally join the declaration of intent of the coalition (attached herein). The ministers of Mauritius, Sweden, Bangladesh, Italy, Chile and HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco signed this declaration then. Australia and Senegal joined the dynamic shortly afterwards. Finally, representatives from the civil society (researchers, associations, private sector) gave testimonies of their commitment towards the reduction of plastic waste.

Concrete actions in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

The coalition is part of a larger momentum around the fight against marine litter, with an important focus on waste from single-use plastic products. Against this background, France considers useful to create synergies with other initiatives created at the international level. To this end, France discussed with UNEP and decided to contribute financially to its activities under the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML), for the 2017-2020 period. This will also allow to anchor the coalition in a broader framework of actions including, in addition to the governments, international agencies, NGOs, academia, the civil society and the private sector.

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An agreement is currently being finalized between France and UNEP, requesting UNEP to implement the following actions by the end of 2020:

1 Consolidate the political mobilization in favor of the fight against land-based marine litter :

In particular :

- Refine the knowledge of the levers of action of the public policies fighting against marine litter (bans, taxes,...), by complementing existing studies in order to **create a tool-box for political decision-makers and help them take action**. This work will be focused on a small number of key-products generating a lot of marine litter (including plastic bags). This tool-box could inter alia, identify the scientific basis of national measures, and among them environmental studies such as « life cycle analysis » or economical data regarding impacts on plastic sectors.

- **Support the development of a roadmap of political goals on marine litter**, including key practical targets (eg, elimination of single-use plastic bags in 100 countries by 2020), that could be adopted during the five-year meeting of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities that is going to take place in September 2017, and in the framework of the United Nation Environment Assembly in December 2017.

- **Raise the citizens of the world awareness regarding marine litter with the Marine Litter Campaign**, with a specific focus on Mediterranean and African countries.

2. Develop and implement a support programme for a small number of pilot countries, voluntary to establish plastic waste reduction measures.

These countries will have to be identified taking into account the geographical representation (including, if possible, at least one Mediterranean country), and the fact that their experience can be used as an example for other countries to offer some leverage. UNEP will provide resources, including the tool-box above mentioned, to support the countries initiatives in a practical way. The mobilization of other partners will also be necessary to amplify this momentum.

3. To continue developing the international coalition on plastic bags

UNEP is in charge of :
- the animation of the initiative (namely the secretariat of the coalition),
- encouraging further countries to join the coalition,
- proposing the members of the coalition to associate with the above mentioned actions,
- **identifying and participating in events allowing the promotion of the coalition and its concrete actions including the « Conférence Méditerranée » on February 23, 2017, in cooperation with France and the other leading countries.**

<u>Members of the coalition</u>

To this day, the members of the coalition are:
France, Monaco, Morocco, Mauritius, Sweden, Italy, Chile, Bangladesh, Australia, Senegal.

<u>How to join the coalition</u>

Apart from dedicated signing events that may be organized during international gatherings, countries willing to join the coalition can formalize their membership by sending a letter to Mme Ségolène Royal, Ministry of Environment, Energy and the Seas, responsible for International Climate Relations (Hôtel de Roquelaure, 246 boulevard Saint-Germain, 75007 Paris)

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Members of the coalition expected role

By joining the coalition, members express a commitment to provide political support to the actions aiming at reducing or even suppressing single-use plastic bags and more generally fighting plastic waste pollution of the oceans, sharing national experiences and fostering exchange of expertise and best practices. Joining the coalition does not necessarily imply financial support. This initiative is of political nature. Members of the coalition are encouraged to join the GPML (if they are not members yet) and, if they wish so, to provide financial contributions to UNEP, in order to support the actions mentioned above.

Next steps

Meetings and conferences may be planned (dedicated or in the margins of international meetings) to drive forward the dynamic of this coalition. In the short term it is aimed at representing the coalition in all relevant international meetings in order to consolidate the momentum by encouraging new memberships. Subject to confirmation, it is foreseen to officially announce to the partnership with UNEP/GPML during the Mediterranean conference that will take place in Paris on February 23. A signing event could also be organized during this conference. Similarly another signing event could be organized in the margins of the conferences of the parties to the Cartagena Convention and its protocols that will take place in French Guyana from 13 to 17 March.

The practical procedures for exchanging information and expertise within the coalition will be specified in the near future.

For further information, please contact:

Ministry of the Environment, Energy and the Sea

General Directorate for Risk Prevention

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