



PREVENTING PLASTIC POLLUTION

National Plastics Management Plans: A thematic summary

Exploring a key theme from the report *Possible elements of a new global agreement to prevent plastic pollution*

The development and implementation of **National Plastics Management Plans** (NPMPs) is one of the proposed core commitments of a new global agreement to prevent plastic pollution. NPMPs could provide a vehicle for progress across nations and regions by empowering countries to set targets and develop and implement national policies, tailored to meet specific national needs and circumstances and addressing the life cycle of plastics. All sources and relevant sectors should be captured.

Standardised features and principles for the development of NPMPs could be embedded in the agreement and later elaborated in subsequent guidance. UNEA Resolution 3/7 (para 4) outlines useful elements for inclusion in national action

plans, including encouraging redesign and reuse of products and materials, encouraging resource efficiency, increasing collection and recycling rates of plastic waste, and avoiding the unnecessary use of plastic, especially plastic containing chemicals of particular concern.

These measures align closely with the four strategic goals suggested for the new global agreement, namely:

1. Elimination of problematic and avoidable plastic products (reduction)
2. Sustainable management of essential plastic products (redesign)
3. Sustainable plastic waste management (reuse, repair, recycling)
4. Chemical hazard reduction

Many countries have pioneered national action plans with various approaches. However, without a coordinated approach to their development and a dedicated platform for review, results risk remaining modest and impacts poorly understood. The added value of the agreement is that it will help governments to prioritise plastic pollution by facilitating the adoption of NPMPs at the highest political level, and by encouraging a whole-of-society approach to their implementation, helping to attract necessary financing and other resources.

The content of NPMPs

The design of NPMPs must allow for some flexibility, but must also drive national action towards achieving and tracking the global goals. Their development could precede an identification of strengths and challenges, as well as review of existing legislation for its effectiveness and possible gaps, to help prioritise national actions. The following principles and features could be considered in designing a national action plan mechanism:

- **Progression** needs to be reflected as a key principle enabling action plans to function as “living documents” that reflect the highest possible ambition and progression over time. This will ensure that targets and measures set by countries are incremental within successive plans.
- **Transparency** provides for the presentation of information that is clear, understandable and verifiable. Reporting on information necessary to track the implementation and achievement of NPMPs will help to further increase transparency.
- **Policy coherence** across all relevant sectors can be achieved through a participatory approach to planning, implementation and review of NPMPs. An NPMP can function as an overarching framework for all relevant international instruments, including relevant goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- **Context sensitivity** in addressing national sources and pathways is important given that national priorities and circumstances vary greatly. NPMPs could allow for flexibility at the national level in identifying measures and setting targets.
- **Measurability** through the use of quantified national targets is important. The strategic goals could provide a common framework for setting measurable targets to ensure convergence between plans, thus helping track global progress. Furthermore, broad categories of indicators for different types of measures could be identified, allowing countries to select which of these are appropriate to their circumstances.

- **Long-term financial stability** of the plans should be pursued by securing funding from all relevant sources, including public, private, international and domestic sources. The role of international funding will be pronounced in the initial phase, enabling the development of NPMPs and the introduction of relevant measures. This includes assistance to develop regulatory and market-based instruments for generating a stable and long-term source of domestic funding for the sustainable management of plastics across the life cycle.
- **Strengthening of institutional capacity** should be a central feature during the preparation and implementation of NPMPs. Preparing NPMPs requires substantive amounts of data, knowledge and capacity to assess the potential outcomes of various policy options, as well as financial and human resources. Without proper analysis and data, there is risk that goals, targets and policies will be under- or over-ambitious, undermining successful implementation of NPMPs.

Reporting on NPMPs

Agreeing on minimum common elements could avoid challenges resulting from providing flexibility in the development of NPMPs. This flexibility could lead to incomplete and incomparable information between countries. Elements to be considered for standardisation across NPMPs include:

- Scope of the NPMP
- Baselines and targets for each of the four strategic goals
- Timeframes, particularly for review
- Methodology for achieving targets
- Consideration of synergies with other relevant initiatives

Ideally, the targets should be formulated to be smart (specific, measurable, ambitious, realistic and time-bound). Accountability is important to assess the achievement of national targets through the development of common methodologies for reporting. The global review could help to assess collective progress, against the strategic goals and the overall objective to eliminate leakage of plastics and microplastics in the environment.

For further details, refer to section 6.1 and Annex 1 on NPMPs and section 8 on measuring progress in the report “Possible elements of a new global agreement to prevent plastic pollution”.