

The Group of Friends to Combat Marine Plastic Pollution

Launch Event on World Oceans Day 08 June 2020, 9-11am EDT

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Concept Note

Date and Time: 8 June 2020, 9-11AM EDT/NY-time

Venue: online via Zoom for speakers and via video link for viewers

Hosted by: Permanent Missions of Norway, Antigua and Barbuda, and the Maldives

On World Oceans Day (June 8), we invite you to participate in the official launch of the Group of Friends to Combat Marine Plastic Pollution (<https://bit.ly/CombatMarinePlastic>).

This event will outline the vision for the *Group of Friends to Combat Marine Plastic Pollution* and reaffirm the political commitment of the founding members to address the issue of marine plastic pollution in an effective, focussed and diligent manner.

Background

Plastic production has skyrocketed, going from 2 million metric tons in 1950 to 380 million metric tons in 2015. It is expected to further triple in the next two decades.¹ The numerous properties of plastics - lightweight, low cost, easily shaped, protects against contamination, and durability to withstand transportation and long-term storage – along with its use in a wide array of applications, has led to this explosive growth in production.

The increased use of plastics has resulted in a corresponding increase in plastic pollution. It is exactly its durability and resistance to degradation that allows plastics to persist in the environment for long time spans either in its original form or broken down into microplastics. It pollutes our lands, rivers, seas, oceans and now permeate our food and drinking water supplies.

¹ Geyer et al. 2017, <https://advances.sciencemag.org/content/3/7/e1700782>

Notably, the overuse of single-use plastics has contributed to a global, environmental catastrophe.

This crisis requires a comprehensive response that considers the entire lifecycle of plastics at the local, national and global levels. In the past year alone, states have amended the Basel Convention to include plastics, extended and expanded the work of the UNEP Open-Ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics, and issued regional declarations on plastics in the Nordic countries, the Caribbean, the Pacific and Africa. Private sector and civil society actors have taken action themselves and pushed for greater action by states. Despite all of this, the global response to the plastics problem remains compartmentalized.

To address this challenge a number of engaged and active countries began discussions late last year at UNHQ on the potential for working together to coordinate and build on these efforts to address marine plastic pollution taking place in various forums and at various levels of government and society. These efforts would be directed towards strengthening political momentum for an effective, coherent and coordinated action and solutions to address plastic pollution. Out of these discussions the Group of Friends to Combat Marine Plastic Pollution was conceived.

Work of the Group of Friends to Combat Marine Plastic Pollution

The Group of Friends is intended to create a space to continue to advance efforts to find common understanding and address marine plastic pollution among UNHQ-based diplomats and their capital-based colleagues. This will be achieved through **technical-level discussion that include building deeper foundational knowledge of the plastic challenge** (including of the current work underway in various multilateral fora such as UNEA) to help facilitate deeper and more substantive discussion, communication and understanding between UNHQ-based diplomats, their colleagues in their respective capitals and other experts.

The Group of Friends will also **work together to develop a strategy for collective engagement at UNHQ** including co-hosting of events, joint statements and other collaborations and will also work together to **raise awareness among the public and media** on marine plastic pollution.

More information about the Group of Friends can be found at <https://bit.ly/CombatMarinePlastic>.

Launch Event

This will be a 120-minute online Zoom event.

Speakers will be provided a link to participate in the live Zoom event and viewers will be provided a separate link to watch it live.

The event will be archived and available online at <https://bit.ly/CombatMarinePlastic> for viewing after the conclusion of the live event.

Speakers list

Given the technical requirements and limited time available for this event, speaking slots will be allocated by inscription only, and each speaker will be given a maximum of 2 minutes. Founding members of the Group of Friends will be given priority.

To request a live or pre-recorded video speaking slot please [register here](#) or send an e-mail to Birgitte.Wilhelmsen.Wessel@mfa.no and Sascha.Mari.Loe.Randal@mfa.no.

Please note that non-founding members may request to be inscribed in the speaking list and slots will be made available if time permits.

Submit a question for the Ministerial Dialogue

As a part of the launch programme, there will be a Ministerial Dialogue between:

- *H.E. Abdulla Shahid, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of the Maldives*
- *H.E. Dean Jonas, Minister for Social Transformation and the Blue Economy, Antigua and Barbuda*

The dialogue will be moderated by H.E. Mona Juul, Permanent Representative of Norway.

Submit your questions for the Ministerial Dialogue segment of the launch of the Group of Friends by email to Birgitte.Wilhelmsen.Wessel@mfa.no and Sascha.Mari.Loe.Randal@mfa.no before 4 June.

Use **#CombatMarinePlastic** on social media

Launch Programme

1. Opening of the meeting

9:00-9:05AM

- *H.E. Thilmeeza Hussain, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Maldives to the United Nations*

2. Statements by high level representatives of the co-Chairs of the Group of Friends

9:05-9:20AM

- *H.E. Erna Solberg, Prime Minister, Norway (3-5 min - video)*
- *H.E. Abdulla Shahid, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of The Maldives (3-5 min - live)*
- *H.E. Dean Jonas, Minister for Social Transformation and the Blue Economy, Antigua and Barbuda (3-5 min - live)*

3. Statements by high level representatives of the United Nations

9:20-9:40AM

- *H.E. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, President of the General Assembly (3-5 min- live)*
- *H.E. Peter Thomson, UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean (3-5 min – video)*
- *H.E. Inger Andersen, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (3-5 min - live)*

4. Ministerial Dialogue

9:40-9:50AM

- *Dialogue between H.E. Abdulla Shahid, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Maldives and H.E. Dean Jonas, Minister for Social Transformation and the Blue Economy, Antigua and Barbuda, facilitated by H.E. Mona Juul, Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations*

5. Interventions by Founding Members of the Group of Friends

9:50-10:55AM

- *Interventions by founding members (max. 2 min per speaker)*
- *Interventions by non-founding members, time permitting (max. 2 min per speaker)*

6. Closing and wrap-up

10:55-11:00AM

- *H.E. Walton Alfonso Webson, Permanent Representative Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations*