



## **Introduction**

Marine litter is any persistent, manufactured or processed solid material discarded, disposed of or abandoned in the marine and coastal environment. Marine litter consists of items that have been made or used by people and deliberately discarded or unintentionally lost into the sea or coastline including such materials transported into the marine environment from land by rivers, drainage or sewage systems or wind.

The GESAMP WG 40 has completed the first phase of its work programme under the leadership of the IOC and has started the second phase with a co-sponsorship shared by the IOC and UNEP. The new Terms of Reference were adopted in early 2015 and the first inception workshop was held from 2 to 6 November 2015 at IOC/UNESCO in Paris. It was attended by 25 WG members, three observers (PlasticsEurope, the American Chemistry Council and the University of Copenhagen), and members of FAO, UNEP and IOC. The first WG 40 state-of-the-art assessment report (GESAMP Reports and Studies No. 90) was published on-line. One noteworthy aspect of the report is the inclusion of confidence levels. A wider discussion on risk, including perceived risk, focuses on the need for WG 40 to develop a risk assessment framework. There is a need to provide a range of options when describing potential solutions and to distinguish issues of ecological significance from those that are useful for awareness raising. Further funding will be required to carry out the full scope of the agreed work programme following the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-2), when the Norwegian Government support to UNEP for the study expires.

An immediate milestone for this group is to provide an interim assessment report, including the impact of microplastics on commercial fish and shellfish species, to inform the Second Meeting of the UNEA-2, taking place in June 2016.

## **2. Transboundary Waters Assessment Programme (TWAP) Open Ocean and Large Marine Ecosystem components**

In the context of the GEF Transboundary Water Assessment Programme (TWAP), the IOC in collaboration with

*the point(s) of entry.*

*Plastic enters the marine environment from a wide variety of land-based and sea-*