



**Asia-Pacific
Economic Cooperation**

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Agenda Item: VI A

Virtual Working Group on Marine Debris: Terms of Reference

Purpose: Information

Submitted by: VWG on Marine Debris

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APEC
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**5th Oceans and Fisheries Working Group Meeting
Boracay, Philippines
10-12 May 2015**

The APEC Chemical Dialogue: Virtual Working Group on Sustainable Material Management and Innovative Solutions to the Problem of Marine Debris

Terms of Reference

Background

On July 13, 2014, the Chemical Dialogue (“Dialogue”) approved the formation of a Virtual Working Group (“VWG”) in collaboration with the Oceans and Fisheries Working Group (“OFWG”) to promote innovative solutions to the issue of marine debris particularly through a focus on sustainable land-based waste management. On August 12, 2014, the Dialogue requested that the VWG formalize its work through the drafting of a Terms of Reference for approval by the Dialogue.

Marine debris is a complex, shared global problem that does not have simple solutions. However, in recent years, technology innovations and new approaches have been developed to improve material capture, sortation and recovery, waste-to-worth initiatives, and product innovations leading to source reduction.

The VWG takes note of the substantial international work that has already occurred to address marine debris, including by the United Nations Environment Programme (“UNEP”) via their Global Partnership on Marine Litter (under the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities), and with others via the “Honolulu Strategy” and Honolulu Commitment. Plastic makers have announced nearly 200 actions through their industry’s Declaration of the Global Plastics Associations for Solutions on Marine Litter (“Global Declaration”).

APEC’s efforts occur within this context and seek to leverage APEC’s unique capacities to further these efforts. APEC cannot independently solve marine debris on a global basis, but by leveraging its unique capabilities as well as focusing in particular on land-based waste management efforts and innovative new technologies that can be applied in the region, APEC can lead the way on discrete – and achievable - solutions.

Objectives

The VWG was developed to capitalize on APEC’s ability to regionalize public-private models, its convening power as a forum for the world’s fastest growing and most dynamic economies, and the core role of the Pacific Ocean in APEC’s existence. These efforts will include, *inter alia*, possible work in the following areas:

- **Promotion of Plastics Recycling**: For example, through the provision of incentives to local communities and small and medium sized enterprises for the collection and recycling of plastic waste
- **Piloting of Innovative Technologies**: The VWG will promote pilots of, and information sharing about, innovative technologies to address marine debris, including but not limited to technologies addressing energy recovery;
- **Education and Information Sharing**: For example, by increasing outreach to local communities regarding the importance of recycling and waste management and litter avoidance;
- **Building on Existing Public-Private Partnerships**: For example, industry’s stewardship efforts on plastic pellets, associations of fishing net makers and fishers, collaborations between consumer product companies and local governments, etc.; and

- **Sharing of Existing and Development of New Best Practices:** For example, sharing existing best practices on land-based waste management and consideration of possible development of APEC best practices or promotion of existing best practices.
- **Partnerships:** With agreement from the Dialogue, the VWG could also conduct outreach to other regional Pacific groups, such as the Pacific Islands Forum (“PIF”), International organizations, and civil society groups, as appropriate.

Administration

The VWG will be composed of representatives from both governments and industry from APEC economies. Participants from the Dialogue and from the Oceans and Fisheries Working Group are invited to become members. Because the issue of marine debris crosses many agencies, economy CD/OFWG representatives are invited to nominate VWG participants from other economy agencies if desired. For ease of administration, each represented economy will have one designated point of contact who can then further distribute information. Participants from other relevant APEC fora (for example, the Policy Partnership on Science, Technology and Innovation (PPSTI), the Small and Medium Sized Enterprises Working Group (SMEWG), the Committee on Trade and Investment (CTI), the Steering Committee on Economic and Technical Cooperation (SCE), etc.) are also welcome to join subject to approval by the VWG Co-Chairs.

The VWG will be co-chaired by a Government and Industry Co-Chair. The chairs will be elected by members of the VWG and will serve a two-year term, renewable upon approval by the VWG.

The VWG’s work will be guided by a long-term work plan, likely 2015-2017. The work plan will be developed by the VWG and submitted to the Dialogue for endorsement. The work plan will be a “living document” and revised regularly to reflect ongoing work and developing priorities. It will be regularly submitted to the Dialogue for review. VWG participants will contribute as they are able to the objectives of the VWG and to the execution of its work plan.

The VWG will meet virtually – by phone or video conference – on a regular basis intersessionally. The VWG will report progress to the CD and OFWG meetings and recommend additional actions for consideration.

Document Version Management

- **Originally Approved:**
 - Chemical Dialogue: February 15, 2015
 - Oceans and Fisheries Working Group: April 1, 2015