

Shaping action and measures to effectively address marine plastic pollution in the Western Indian Ocean Region

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Abstract

The specific purpose of the regional assessment was to provide a reliable and credible baseline metrics on key plastic flows and leakages into the Western Indian Ocean, integrating both a quantitative technical assessment, qualitative process to quantify potential impacts of plastic in the marine environment, and strategic priority interventions and policy options. The assessment outlines robust metrics of regional significance, with enough granularity for action that enable governments and regional bodies in the WIO to promote, enact and enforce legislation and other effective measures to better contain and reduce marine plastic pollution. The results from the assessment are aimed at supporting and informing the review of important action plans and strategies developed within the region to address marine plastic pollution. The analysis above clearly demonstrates that marine plastic pollution is real and continues to present challenges to the integrity of coastal livelihoods and marine biodiversity in the Western Indian Ocean. It further highlights that the most urgent short-term solution to minimizing marine plastics inputs in the WIO region is through improved waste collection and management. The following recommendations are provided:

- Urge governments to undertake measures to strengthen plastic recycling capacity, lessen the burden of entry and scaling for informal and formal actors, and adherence to established norms, standards, and licensing requirements as applicable.
- Encourage governments to implement measures that discourage the production and import of plastic objects that do not benefit from a recycling solution within national jurisdiction.
- Facilitate the strengthening of tools, capacities and knowledge for municipalities and local government to address plastic pollution in major cities, towns and peri-urban areas.
- Urge municipalities and local governments to scale measures to address widespread littering and open burning of plastics through increased waste collection effort.
- Urge governments and private sector in the WIO region to develop and support measures that increase the value of after-use plastics and encourage the redesign of products and materials for End-of-Life value and circularity.
- Call for scaling up of measures for plastic waste collection and recovery, improved integration of the informal sector in the waste economy; and increased funding to local initiatives for enhanced community livelihood options and to address the socio-equity gap in circular economy.