



# MARINE LITTER

UNEP/GPA & UNEP/RS



# Marine Litter

## Definition:

- ‘any persistent, manufactured or processed solid material discarded, disposed of, or abandoned in the marine and coastal environment’

Source: Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (adopted in Washington DC, 1995)

# Marine Litter

## Quantities:

**the total input of Marine Litter into the oceans and seas worldwide is estimated at**

- 6.4 Million tonnes per year**
- 8 Million items every day**
- 13,000 pieces of plastic on every square km**

# Marine Litter

## Characteristics:

- **Consistency:** variety of plastics (90-95%), metals and glass
- **Mobility:** travels huge distances around the world with ocean currents and winds
- **Persistency:** long-lived and active for decades
- **Effects:** a threat to marine life and humans, directly and indirectly
- **Impact:** entails economic losses to fishermen, coastal communities, boat owners, tourism, *etcetera*



# Marine Litter

## Distribution:

- in the water column being transported horizontally and vertically mostly floating on or close to the water surface  
(90%) are light plastics, or related polymers items
- on the seabed heavier components at all depths, 70 % ends up on the seabed (15 % on the beaches, 15 % floating)
- on beaches, shores deposited worldwide

**Marine Litter has affected all parts of the world's seas and oceans !**

# Marine Litter

- **Sea-based sources:**
  - Merchant shipping, ferries and cruise liners
  - Fishing vessels and fish farming
  - Naval vessels and research ships
  - Pleasure craft
  - Offshore oil and gas platforms
  - Ghost fishing
- **Land-based sources:**
  - Waste from municipal landfills located on the coast or by river transport
  - Discharge of untreated municipal sewage and storm water
  - Industrial facilities
  - Tourism and beach-going leftovers

# Marine Litter

## Threats to marine life:

- Entanglement
- Ingestion
- Destruction or smothering of the seabed, incl. coral reefs and seagrasses
- Transportation of invasive species



# Marine Litter

## Other damages:

- Affecting pristine habitats
- Contamination of beaches
- Damage to peoples health and safety risks
- Injury to cattle grazing in coastal areas
- Contamination of harbours and marinas
- Damage to fishing vessels and gear
- Damage to power stations and desalination plants



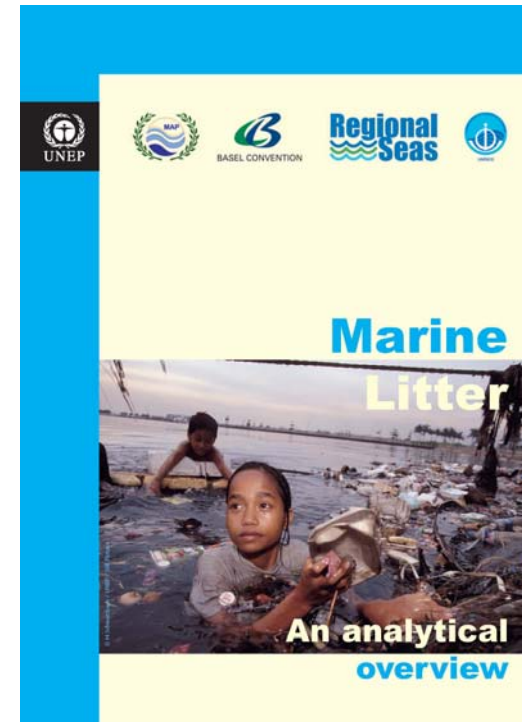


# Marine Litter

Report May 2005:

Joint study of UNEP and partners:  
*“An Analytical Overview of the Sustainable Management of Marine Litter”*

- Compilation on the **current status, problems and threats** associated with Marine Litter
- Examples of international, regional and national legal **instruments and policies** for the sustainable management of Marine Litter



# Marine Litter

## Trend:

- **Worldwide inputs of Marine Litter into the oceans are increasing, despite international, regional and national efforts**

## Causative factors:

- **A lack of international legal instruments**
- **Increasing deficiencies in implementation and enforcement of existing regulations and standards**
- **Lack of awareness among main stakeholders and the general public**

# Marine Litter

## Relevant Conventions and Agreements

- **MARPOL 73/78 Convention** for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (Annex V)
- **London Convention** for the Prevention of Marine Pollution from Dumping of Wastes
- **Basel Convention** on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal
- **Agenda 21, Johannesburg Plan of Implementation**
- **Global Programme of Action** for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities
- **Convention on Biological Diversity**, with the Jakarta Mandate
- **Convention on Migratory Species**
- **FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries**



# Marine Litter

## Some (UNEP) Regional Seas Initiatives:

- **Mediterranean (MAP)**
  - > guidelines
  - > recent assessment: importance of, e.g., coastal cities, lack of relevant policies
- **Caribbean region (AMEP, SPAW)**
  - > management plan, special attention to SIDS
- **North West Pacific (NOWPAP)**
  - > Joint initiative under development (IGM 9)
- **Black Sea: Development Regional Action Plan**
- **South Asian Seas (SACEP)**
- **South Pacific (SPREP)**

*etcetera*

# GPA and Marine Litter

**GPA recognizes Marine Litter as an important marine pollution category to be addressed**

## **GPA Objectives on Marine Litter:**

- to establish controlled and environmentally sound facilities for receiving, collecting, handling and disposing of litter from coastal area communities
- to reduce significantly the amount of litter reaching the marine and coastal environment by the prevention or reduction of the generation of solid waste and improvements in its management, including collection and recycling of litter

Actions proposed: national, regional and international

**GPA is mainly implemented through the Regional Seas Programme**





# 2<sup>nd</sup> IGR meeting on GPA

**Beijing, China: 16 – 20 October 2006**

- Could be a venue to review progress in addressing marine litter, or strengthening partnerships
- Will consist, among others, of a ministerial and a partnership segment

# Marine Litter

**Report May 2005:**

**Recommendations**

**Awareness raising**

**A series of national, regional and global activities aimed at controlling, reducing and abating the problems associated with Marine Litter**

**Creating regional partnerships, engaging all relevant stakeholders**

