

SELECTED SATELLITE ACTIVITY

for the Ocean Decade Laboratories



2021
2030 United Nations Decade
of Ocean Science
for Sustainable Development

Plastic pollution in the Southern Ocean: a Global Outlook



Host and Moderators: **SCAR PLASTIC WG** steering committee



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Invited Panelists



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Main Challenge

Assess the amount of plastic entering from within and outside the Southern Ocean

Identify sources
and quantity
the extent



Understand
fate
and behaviour



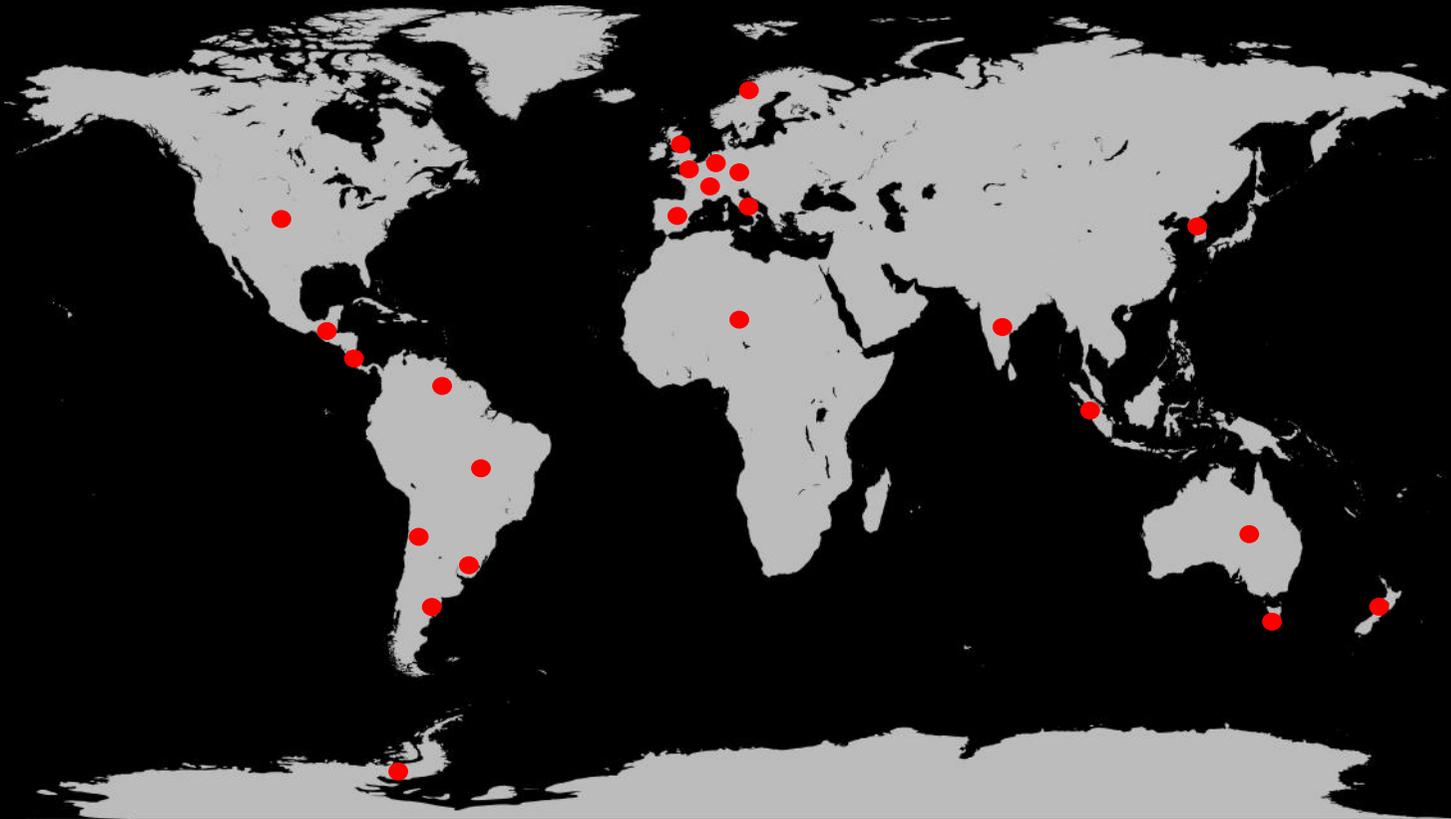
Minimize any
impact and
limit risk

Aim of the satellite activity

To promote a discussion on how to prevent and mitigate plastic pollution in the SO within a broader global scale perspective

2 hours of engaging conversation
stimulated by guiding questions

80 participants from 23 countries



plus Antarctica!

Question 1: The topic of the March 2022 Ocean Decade laboratory is “a Healthy and Resilient Ocean” in which marine ecosystems are mapped and protected. In your opinion, which is the missing piece of the puzzle / one of the key aspects that is preventing an effective monitoring and protection of Antarctica from plastic debris?

- Trace the input of plastics from outside Antarctic waters
- Undertake more surveys and modelling to understand baselines
- Understand the origin and extent of plastics from scientific activities, tourism and fishing
- To be aware of and moderate our own impact on the Antarctic environment
- To understand how plastic pollution in the Antarctic region influences the rest of world and vice-versa

Question 2: ATS (Antarctic Treaty System) is increasingly focussed on addressing locally sourced marine plastic pollution (i.e, research, fisheries and tourism). A significant problem remains with marine plastic pollution originating from outside Antarctic Treaty Area that requires a governance response from outside the ATS. What in your opinion is a necessary step to promote wider, globally oriented, initiatives?

- Plastic has even reached Antarctica – illustrate the global issue of plastics in a similar way to how the ozone hole raised public attention and enforced actions
- Broader guidelines and a multidisciplinary approach
- Education to minimise our “plastic footprint” even in the polar regions
- Value plastics with an end-to-end approach
- Inspire a Zero Waste culture

Question 3: Can we learn from initiatives in other global areas (local, national or regional initiatives). Do you know of any examples of successful projects managing plastic waste in remote and pristine environments, which could use as models to address the plastics problem in Antarctica?

- United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme (March 2022) – draft resolution to End Plastic Pollution
- Development of collaborative projects connecting sites around Antarctica
- Stress the importance of Marine Protected Areas in understanding the dynamics of plastics
- Technologies such as filters for wastewater to limit the release of microplastics
- Encourage industry to replace plastic with more easily degradable materials

Question 4: The first target of the UN Sustainable Development Goal 14 “Life below water” is to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution (including plastic debris) by 2025. Which actions should be prioritized in the next years to approach the target of SDG 14 for the Southern Ocean?

- Collaboration between science, policy and industry
- Engagement with governments – not just those who are part of the Antarctic Treaty System
- Inclusion of citizen science projects
- Education and the involvement of diverse groups including Non Governmental Organisations
- Remove macroplastics before they become microplastics and are much more difficult to remove

Main points of discussion

- Education and global co-operation are key efforts to tackle plastic pollution
- Discussion dealing with government action to regulate plastic pollution
- Persuade local and global communities to consider their “plastic footprint”, even in remote polar areas
- Importance of standard practice and universal guidelines in plastic pollution research
- A current assessment of our own activities is important – it is critical to produce a review of initiatives from different nations operating in Antarctica

Final message

Marine and terrestrial plastics in the SO and Antarctica represent a serious concern and we need to *ActNow* before it is too late

Sources of plastic must be identified to manage their entry into the Antarctic marine and terrestrial environments

Local and global initiatives are urgently needed to prevent further plastics reaching the SO and Antarctica and to clean up the existing problem

A commitment of major organizations operating in the SO and Antarctica to build common frameworks and strategies for managing plastic waste needs to be promoted