

## Event summary

### “Solving the plastic waste crisis in urban waterways” World Water Week, 29<sup>th</sup> of August 2017, 14.00-15.30, FH307, Stockholm

How to reduce the input of plastic waste into urban canals, rivers and the ocean? A joint event of BMZ, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, GIZ, ISWA and UNESCO at the World Water Week 2017 in Stockholm outlined circular economy approaches for sustainable plastic cycles at the intersection of the water, sanitation, waste and packaging sectors.



*Franz-Birger Marré, BMZ*

**Franz-Birger Marré** of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) emphasized the increasing international attention paid to marine litter and its concerning effects on ecosystems and the economy, which led in July 2017 to the adoption of the G20 Action Plan on Marine Litter. As most marine litter results from land-based sources, solutions would need to involve strengthening municipal solid waste management as well as moving towards sustainable packaging value chains.



*Panelists from left to right: Dr Costas Velis, ISWA; Dr Sarantuyaa Zandaryaa, UNESCO; Klaus Gihl, KfW; Dale Walker, Ellen MacArthur Foundation / World Economic Forum; Dr Mats Linder, Ellen MacArthur Foundation*

**Dr Sarantuyaa Zandaryaa** of UNESCO’s International Initiative on Water Quality (IIWQ) presented insights from a study on “Microplastics in freshwater environments”. She highlighted that microplastics have become ubiquitous and are even traceable in remote areas such as Lake Khuvsgul in Mongolia. More scientific research would be required to better understand its dispersion, effects on biota and associated risks.

**Dr Costas Velis** introduced the Marine Litter Task Force of the International Solid Waste Association (ISWA), which explores the contribution of sound waste management to preventing plastics from leaking into the ocean. Current research would concentrate on identifying pathways of plastics and effective intervention points in cities, ports, rivers and dumpsites in areas with different socio-economic conditions.

**Klaus Gihl** of KfW Development Bank stressed that improved waste management requires covering not only investment costs but particularly also its considerable operating costs. Furthermore, policy dialogue with major contributors to plastic waste, the engagement of local NGOs within their respective countries as well as setting-up a project pipeline would be key driving forces.



*Participants*

**Dr Mats Linder** of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation presented the ‘New Plastics Economy’ Initiative. The global plastic packaging industry would still be linear: While only 14% of 78 million t of plastic packaging is collected for recycling, the rest is leaked to the environment (32%), landfilled (40%) or energetically



*Participants*



*Pascal Renaud, GIZ*

recovered (14%). Yet, it would be possible to increase recycling to 50%, reuse to 20% and to approach the remaining 30% through fundamental redesign and innovation.

**Dale Walker** of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and the World Economic Forum introduced ongoing work on ‘Urban Biocycles’ as solutions to plastic waste are embedded in a broader system of circular economy. Current work of the two organizations’ ‘Project Mainstream’ looks at nutrients, energy and material recovery from organic waste and wastewater. Waste managers should understand themselves as resource managers.

A concluding discussion with the audience of around 40 participants was moderated by **Pascal Renaud** of GIZ’s sector project on sustainable waste management and circular economy. Questions referred to topics such as policies for macro- and microplastics, solutions to deal with toxic substances in plastic waste as well as how to achieve attractive visualizations of plastic pathways for mobilizing decision-makers.

The **presentations** by the speakers as well as the event flyer and full programme are available online via <http://programme.worldwaterweek.org/event/6746>

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