Position paper

Advocating Extended Producer Responsibility for fishing gear

Developed by IUCN/Searious Business/Global Ghost Gear Initiative/UNEP/Ellen MacArthur Foundation in consultation with WTO, UNCTAD, EU, WWF Germany

Recent years have seen a significant increase in concern about the global problem of used fishing gear and ropes ƛƴ ΰƘŜ ǿƻǊƭŘΩǎ ƻŎŜŀƴǎ ŀƴŘ ƛƴ other aquatic environments (this paper also extends to gear used in aquaculture). Fishing gear has been found to be one of the main sources of marine plastic litter. Recent studies have suggested that between 46%[1] and 70%[2] of the floating macroplastics in the ocean gyres is made up of fishing gear and maritime ropes. Being purposely designed to catch aquatic species, abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG), is one of the most harmful forms of marine debris, which creates serious issues for the overall health of aquatic environments including our ocean, rivers and lakes. Fishing gear and ropes can continue to fish and trap aquatic life, entangling aquatic megafauna, depleting harvestable fish populations thus impacting global food security, causing hazards to navigation, and acting as a hazard for commercial and non-commercial marine species, and aquatic habitats.

Overfishing from different sources, including ALDFG, is already considerably affecting the marine environment, with nearly 90% ƻŦ ΰƘŜ ǿƻǊƭŘΩǎ ϒƛƴƴȅǎ ŦƛǎƘ ǎǘƻŎƪǎ depleted[3]. Furthermore, marine plastics can flow through different national jurisdictions and international waters, making the issue of fishing gear and ropes a cross-border global challenge. As a global issue

It is essential to also consider the regional and international scope of possible policy instruments. Voluntary guidelines and international codes of conduct adopted through already established international bodies or organizations, are a potential step to take. Regional guidelines on EPR have been developed in areas such as

the European Union. These sorts of guiding documents can be adopted/implemented in other regions as well, and be disseminated throughout fishing communities and in as many languages as possible to make them accessible.

5. Create and strengthen governance mechanisms

Widely implementing EPR schemes and commitments around fishing gear and ropes, will require setting up governance structures with specific mandates and functions that provide for operational objectives, transport/logistics compliance, monitoring, evaluation, reporting and communication of results. It is also essential to identify and act upon synergies of new mechanisms and existing regulations at local, national and international levels to guarantee a coordinated effort and avoid duplicity of functions. Although specific materials to consider and pathways to follow for this case would be different than for other types of plastics, general regulations and governance structures and procedures already in place or being adopted in the future should include fishing gear

includes lost or discarded by accident or emergency. In case of the latter, reported loss should be mandatory, together with GPS locations[11], which will facilitate retrieval.

9. Design effective implementation plans for EPR

EPR schemes are a valuable and cost-effective option that would allow for solutions placed on the post-consumer phase of synthetic fishing gear, but that can also influence relevant decisions at the upstream level to minimize downstream harms. EPR allows for solutions to be flexible and fosters innovation. Private and public approaches should prioritize the promotion of upstream solutions that deal with the requirements for effective recycling of this gear, as well as help preventing gear loss in the environment. From the product design stage, EPR schemes and regulations should consider the promotion of mandatory percentages of recycled and recyclable content for the products in applications of similar value, and improved gear design which considers ease of disassembly and separation of components/materials, thus adding value to products and enable repair / reuse / recycling, and promoting benefits that engage the different actors in the system. Awareness raising measures from the producers within the EPR and other stakeholders could help limiting loss of fishing gear and ropes. These can be strengthened by collection and recycling efforts initiated within the EPR, as well as engagement of the private sector and other key stakeholders involved.

10. Implement regular monitoring and evaluation

Within a possible implementation of these EPR systems, it will also be important to measure by impact. In this sense, producers should commit to deliver mandatory reports reflecting the actual recycled material quantified, which will also help in the development of estimations for the global preventative effort derived from that recycling. In this sense, it would be also essential to align the point at which these measurements are taken across various jurisdictions, as material quantities may vary within the same process[12]. Tonnages collected at port reception facilities will differ to tonnages entering a recycling facility, and the tonnages of recycled product will vary depending on process efficiency, as well as all other management pathways, including landfills and incineration, to have more complete data available

The GGGI has developed a global database for ALDFG[13] that collects knowledge around sources, locations, amounts, types, fates, and impacts of ghost gear around the world. It is the largest centralized database concerning ALDFG in the world, Including data from organizations from around the globe including NGOs, governments, IGOs, seafood industry and academia. Providing data on the lifecycle of fishing gear and ropes, including quantities recycled or otherwise disposed of at end-of-life, into this already established database can aid in the quantification of actual results. Data analysis in this sense can also aid States and authorities in ʌŘŜyűʌŦèʌyƎ ƎK2ăű ƎŜI·ℕ άK2űăLJ2űăέΣ KʌƎK ℕΛăʅ ŦΛăKŜℕΛŜă Ŧ2ℕ ƎŜI·ℕ f2ăă I·yŘ ůŜYLJ2ℕI·f I·yŘ ăLJI·ůʌI·f ůℕŜyŘă ʌY ƎK2ăű gear abundance and type, for better scientifically supported decision-making. There are also other databases that contribute to a3(e)-58 g0 G[the)8(EP)5(R,)8(a)-9(s)8(we)6(ll)-6( )9(a)-9(s)8(e)9(n)-7(g)14(a)-0 0 1 28(caF)-58 g300