



United Nations Economic and Social Council

Chair Report

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Committee Topics:

1. The question of the implications of the growing cryptocurrency market
2. Discussing problems with microplastic pollution throughout the world

Committee Overview:

ECOSOC, also known as the United Nations Economic and Social Council is under the authority of the General Assembly (GA) and is one of the 6 principal organs of the United Nations (UN) established by the UN charter in 1945. ECOSOC includes 54 Members of the UN which is elected by the GA. ECOSOC also facilitates economic, social, and developmental goals which are related to the other fourteen United Nations specialized agencies, five regional commissions and functional commissions. This committee acts as the centre of discussion pertaining to international economic and social issues, making it one of the most complex subsidiary bodies in the UN. The council is also responsible for drafting policy recommendations to present and advise the Member States and the United Nations as a whole.

ECOSOC responsibility focuses mainly on improving standards of living, promoting full employment, economic and social progress; identifying solutions to international social, health and economic problems; facilitating educational and cultural cooperations across the globe; as well as promoting universal human rights and freedom.

Topic 1: The Question of the Implications of the Growing Cryptocurrency Market

1. Introduction:

a. Topic Overview:

With the advantage of technology, a digital currency is invented in the 1980s, and since then its influence and security remained a question to the public. Cryptocurrency adopts a “peer-to-peer” system, which means transactions isn’t upon a third party which is a banking system, the currency use network as it is based to distribute the data of the respective digital assets towards many numerous numbers of computers. Public and private keys, as well as various incentive schemes such as proof of work and proof of stake, are used to secure such decentralized transfers of cryptocurrency.

Cryptocurrencies are known for their value trends, where purchasers could expect to get a massive return back from their investment. With the cryptocurrency market’s transparency and its financial market’s data being accessible by everyone across the platform, this new form of digital assets portrays a convenient platform of investment. Furthermore, this virtual currency’s market is always open and takes a form of a global currency rather than a currency that is tied to one national currency, allowing the purchaser of this currency to be able to avoid recession or inflammation of the financial market.

Although, this form of digital assets is not recognized all across the world yet, with some countries considering cryptocurrency as a threat to both security and their respective cultures, which results in some countries labelled cryptocurrencies as an “illegal” currency. By the statistic that have been collected in 2021, there are only 56 countries worldwide that acknowledge. Although, it is significant that a type of cryptocurrency, called “Bitcoin”, is acknowledged in roughly 111 countries.

Furthermore, the implications of cryptocurrency to the current financial markets, might disrupt the flow and change the current financial market in a way that none of us has witnessed before. This portrays that the consequences of this new digital currency are

still unpredictable, which make a significant number of countries across the globe, worried about its usage. This digital currency tends to put further questions on the topic of international trade frameworks in the future, should the implications of cryptocurrency be permitted across the globe in the future.

b. Key Terms:

- I. **Cryptocurrency:** a form of global digital currency that is independent of banking systems
- II. **Blockchain:** is a collection of interconnected bricks or an online ledger. Every block comprises a collection of transactions that each network member has independently validated. Each block must be validated by each node before being confirmed, making forging transaction histories nearly impossible.
- III. **Decentralized market:** contains digital technology allows a "peer-to-peer system"buyers where buyers and sellers of assets deal directly with each other.
- IV. **Inflation:** a gradual increase in the price of goods and services in a given economy.

2. Historical Background:

1980s	Cryptocurrency was first introduced in 1989, it was not until the early 1990s that cryptographic methods and software that would facilitate for the establishment of genuinely decentralized crypto assets began to be developed.
2009	Bitcoin has launched. People who need to transmit money across borders without being hampered by banks or governments are increasingly turning to Bitcoin. The rapid growth of a market that no one is quite familiar with before makes, some people are unsure what to do with their Bitcoins due to their sudden growth in value.
2010	Bitcoin was the only cryptocurrency on the market in early 2010. Its cost was only a few cents at the time. New digital currencies

	entered the market during the next few years, and their prices climbed and fell in synch with Bitcoin's.
2017	This was a significant year of the popularity of cryptocurrency. The number of schemes and frauds aimed at crypto investors grew in tandem with the value of Bitcoin and other digital assets. Thieves managed to take millions of dollars from innocent people trying to earn a quick buck in the crypto frenzy.

3. Current Issue:

Cryptocurrency doesn't take any form of real currencies, rather it is a form of global currency, which means if the world were to adopt this form of currency, national currencies as well as their cultures might get contradicted. It is also important to note that there are many branding structures of cryptocurrencies; different branding have different regulations in regards to the public and government. There are many issues surrounding the ideas of security risk around the idea of cryptocurrency. Due to the fact that this digital token is based on the internet and computers, hacking proves crucial in adopting this system. Furthermore, virtual market transactions may remain anonymous, therefore it is unavoidable that the government is set to regulate this virtual currency. Most importantly, some cryptocurrencies brand structures don't have any government regulations being involved to ensure security, which leads to its lack of intrinsic value poses a huge problem for its intangible presence.

In cryptocurrency, the value of the token remains all upon program developer and investors in the respective forms, which might cause complications with the transaction along with international trade and the global economy as a whole. Due to this new form of currencies that lack intrinsic value, our global economics circulation, international trade, security, and financial markets would not remain the same should we push forward the implications of the growing cryptocurrency market. Many investors see cryptocurrencies as either a vehicle for speculation or a hedge against inflation, but the

market's size as of 2021 does not represent a systemic risk that may trigger a larger global financial crisis in the future.

This new form might bring in risk, with many positive flexibility as well. It is up to different nations to come up with policies and regulations that tackles this problem without erasing cultures and uphold reliability.

4. The Stances of Involved Nations:

- **United States of America (USA)**

Chairman Jerome Powell of the United States Federal Reserve feels that technological challenges exist, and that governance and risk management will be critical before cryptocurrencies become mainstream. The US has many agencies, both at a federal and state level, directed towards this issue (some examples include the Securities and Exchange Commission or the Officer of the Comptroller of the Currency). There have been little to no regulations passed regarding cryptocurrency, where cryptocurrency may be regulated under the CFTC's Commodity Exchange Act.

- **European Central Bank**

The central bank still on its experiment with virtual money/digital asset and plans to begin working on a prototype on 2023. Former European Central Bank Vice President Vitor Constancio referred to Bitcoin as a "tulip" in reference to the 17th-century Dutch bubble, and many other governors have expressed similar reservations.

- **Japan**

The Bank of Japan does not believe that cryptocurrencies have a market. Although, cryptocurrency is legal in Japan, despite a few private company are banned. Private cryptocurrency company in Japan are operating under monitor of Japan FSA.

- **United Kingdom (UK)**

Former Bank of England Governor called cryptocurrencies a "revolution" in finance, making the central bank one of the few governments to support the technology of this new digital assets. Cryptocurrency is legal in the UK.

- **People Republic of China**

The People's Bank of China believes that the time is suitable to welcome cryptocurrencies, but the central bank wants to possess a complete control, and officials are planning to crack down on the country's cryptocurrency sector.

5. Possible Solutions

Solutions varies due to the legal status and illegal status across the world, therefore for countries where cryptocurrencies are legal, policies that regulated the usage of cryptocurrency in order to prevent anonymous, robbery of token coins, as well as preventing financial crisis would be needed. On the other hand, in countries that consider cryptocurrency as “illegal”, negotiations and an introduction of the implications of cryptocurrency towards the public might be needed, as these digital asset is going to be a part of economic circulation in the future. Moreover, if nations hold a strong belief in cultures in relation to currency, the government might want to minimize the usage of cryptocurrency to preserve their culture.

6. Conclusion:

The purpose of this paper is to give delegates an overview of the problem of microplastic pollution around the world. Delegates should be aware that this chair paper does not cover all elements of the issue and that they are free to use this paper as a starting point for their own research. Delegates are asked to consider both long and short-term policies that have already been adopted, as well as generate their own innovative solutions. Cryptocurrency is a new form of currency, therefore delegates are highly encouraged to consider solutions that are sustainable while not contradicting any nations' cultures as well.

7. Questions to Consider:

- a. How would the future financial markets and global economic chain would be, should cryptocurrency be our economic mainstream?

- b. How would the security and sustainability of cryptocurrency be ensured?
- c. How would international trade in the future be, should there be implications of cryptocurrency?
- d. How can nations prevent global economic crises amid the growth of the cryptocurrency market?
- e. Is cryptocurrency a sustainable option for the future, should the UN step in and minimize/regulate the market of cryptocurrency across the globe?
- f. Since cryptocurrency is a global asset, what is the UN role to ensure security and preventing its crisis in the future?

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Topic 2: Discussing problems with microplastic pollution throughout the world

1. Introduction:

a. Topic Overview:

Using plastics in our day to day life is inevitable, it has become indispensable in many areas of modern life. The durability property of plastic is precisely what makes it one of the biggest threats to pollution throughout the world. The existence of microplastics in the environment is often established through aquatic studies and it's a major concern because of their widespread presence in the ocean and the potential physical and toxicological risks they pose to organisms. Despite the mere size of microplastics, studies show that they are major contributors to plastic pollution and are found scattered in the environment – from Mount Everest to the deep sea. In 1950, the world only produced 2 million tonnes of plastic per year, but since then, the annual production has increased by nearly 200 fold, reaching 381 million tonnes in 2015.

This problem of microplastic and marine litter was recognised by the UN General Assembly (GA) in its Resolution A/60/L.22, Oceans and the Law of the Sea, of November 29, 2005, in articles 65-70. In response to the GA call, UNEP (GPA and the Regional Seas Programme), through its Global Marine Litter Initiative took an active lead in addressing the challenge, among others, by assisting 11 Regional Seas around the world in organizing and implementing regional activities on marine litter.

Microplastic pollution is a major problem in marine environments, as it causes issues such as but not limited to disrupting reproductive systems, stunting growth, diminishing appetite, and causing tissue inflammation and liver damage. This results in a chain reaction: animals carry microplastics in their body, and when they are eaten, those microplastics are also ingested by the predator. Microplastic has been found in organisms ranging in size from small invertebrates to large mammals. This process is called the 'trophic transfer' of microplastics. Furthermore, as these plastics evaporate, the rain and air will be contaminated with microplastics. Researchers collected rainwater and air

samples for 14 months, calculating that over 1,000 metric tons of microplastic particles fall into 11 protected areas in the US every year.

Global warming is another byproduct of microplastics. If they travel as far as about 10 km from Earth's surface, these plastics likely serve as a contributor to global warming, adding 0.045 mW/m² or more.

b. Key Terms:

I. Microplastic: The term microplastics was introduced within the last decade to describe small pieces of plastic found in the ocean, commonly defined as < 5mm in diameter

ii. Global warming: long-term gradual increase and heating of Earth's climate system as a result of human activities such as but not limited to burning fossil fuels.

iii. Trophic transfer: elements (including contaminants) are being transferred from one trophic level to another

iv. Biomagnification: concentration of toxins in an organism caused by ingesting other plants or animals in which the toxins are more widely dispersed

2. Background History:

Plastic is manmade and does not exist in nature, therefore, there are no bacteria that are able to decompose it, hence the reason it takes such a long time for it to degrade. Plastic turns into toxic and highly acidic molecules when burned, affecting living organisms. By the year 2050, it is estimated that there will be more plastics in the ocean than fish themselves as there are 311 tonnes of plastic produced per annum. Microplastic pollution has been a problem not long after plastics were developed for commercial use in the 1900s. There are two primary sources of microplastic manufactured. Primary microplastics are one type and these microplastics include plastic pellets and plastic particles manufactured for particular applications such as cosmetic products and abrasives. Secondary microplastics are produced as a result of fragmentation from the larger plastic items.

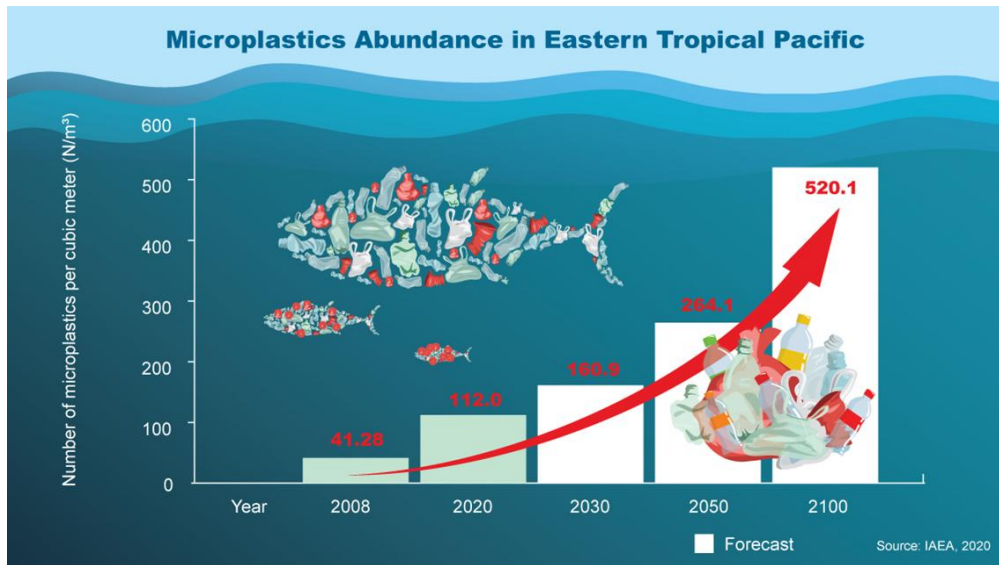


Figure 1: Graph showing microplastics abundance in eastern tropical pacific

Microplastics are distributed throughout the ocean, on shorelines, in surface waters and seabed sediments -- from the Arctic to the Antarctic, microplastics can be found everywhere. 40 million tonnes of microplastics are washed up, buried or resurfaced along the world's shorelines. As seen in figure 1, the number of microplastics per cubic meter is predicted to increase exponentially. They can accumulate in remote locations such as mid-ocean gyres and population centres, shipping routes, etc. In 2010 coastal plastic waste – generated within 50 kilometres of the coastline – amounted to 99.5 million tonnes. As microplastics increase in concentration as moving up the trophic web, it harms not only fish but also the entire ecosystems while reducing the ocean's resilience to climate change. Nano-sized microplastics have been shown to cross cell membranes under laboratory conditions, causing tissue damage. Scientists are extremely concerned regarding microplastic pollution as it had impacted 600 marine species, many dying a slow agonising death through entanglement, blockage of organs, or asphyxiation.

Timeline:

Date	Event
1862	Alexander Parkes developed the first-ever man-made plastic as a substitute for ivory. It was made from organic compounds.
1907	Dr Leo Bakeland developed the first fully synthetic plastic called Bakelite – fully synthetic as in it did not contain any organic compounds.
1933	Polyethylene plastic, nowadays the most common plastic, was developed in England.
1939-1945	Plastic was developed as a means for war. Nylon was developed for use as parachutes and rope. Plexiglass was developed as a substitute for aircraft windows. During this period, plastic production in the United States increased by 300%.
1998	Dramatic increase of microplastic abundance around this time marks an important breakpoint for microplastic contamination. Since then, microplastic abundances continued to increase until today.

3. Current Issue:

Human consumption behaviour in high-income countries are largely responsible for microplastic pollution.

Microplastics have detrimental effects on marine ecosystems, this affects ecosystem services and the economic activities relying on them for revenue generation, sustainable livelihoods and the well-being of communities and citizens.

Enormous volumes of plastics tend to accumulate in the five oceanic ‘garbage patches’, more commonly known as 5 gyres. This is located in the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific oceans. The Great Pacific Garbage Patch is the largest of the 5 gyres, it stretches across the Pacific Ocean between Japan and North America, with its greatest concentration of plastics between California and Hawaii.

Although microplastics are widely dispersed in the world's oceans, Asia takes the lead, contributing to more than 80% of plastic pollution, with China leading at 60 million tonnes. Figure 2 shows that the maximum concentration of microplastic particles lies in East Asia and Pacific (60%), South Asia (11%), Sub-saharan Africa (8.9%), Middle East and North Africa (8.3%), Latin America and the Caribbean (7.2%), Europe and Central Asia (3.6%), North America (0.9%).

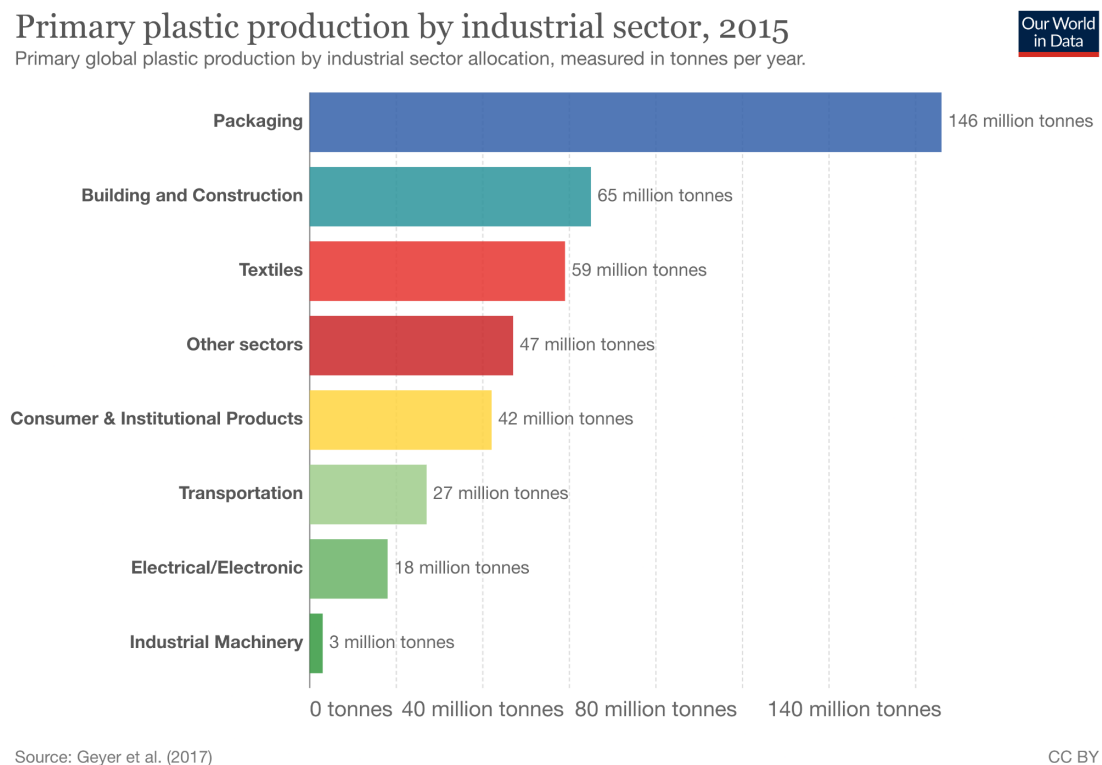


Figure 3: Graph demonstrating primary plastic production by industrial sector (2015)

Packaging is the dominant use of primary plastics as seen in figure 3. Building and construction is a close second, utilising 19% of the total plastic consumption. With only 2 months into 2022, high-income countries (HICs) such as China, the United States, Germany, Brazil, Japan etc are in the lead with producing plastic waste, which is then dumped into the ocean. Because of human consumption in these HICs, it remains

responsible for the aftereffects of their decisions. They produce around ten times more plastic waste than countries such as Mozambique and Bangladesh.

The long-term effects of microplastics affect the economic viability of agriculture, fisheries, and other livelihoods are still largely unknown. Apart from the physical effects of microplastic, another source of concern for many is the potentially toxic chemicals microplastics contain (additives, monomers, catalysts and reaction by-products from manufacture). The high levels of exposure to microplastics are believed to induce inflammatory reactions and toxicity, they can also be vectors of the spreading of pathogens and microbes. These issues further affect the agriculture of specific areas that are vulnerable which impacts the economy of the country.

After conducting four decades of research, scientists discovered that fish are rapidly ingesting more microplastic. 3 years after the UN conducted an international assessment in 2016, the number of marine fish species found containing plastic has quadrupled. From 2011 until now, the proportion of fish consuming microplastic doubled across all species; rising from 15%, the average per cent of fish that contains microplastic increased to 33%. Around 74% of fillets and 63% of livers in a wild fish had at least one microplastic present, while 99% of fish had at least one particle present in the 3 types of fish tissue studied. Because microplastic have a larger surface area to volume ratio, the potential for contaminant exchange is more likely. While more research is needed on the human health impacts, the perceived threat of plastic infested seafood could greatly harm fisheries, especially those in countries that rely on fishing as their main source of income.

A 1-5% loss in marine ecosystem services is estimated as a result of plastic pollution. This reduction is equivalent to the loss of about \$500 billion to \$2.5 trillion per year -- about \$33,000 per metric ton of plastic pollution. In general, the scientific community agrees that there is a detrimental negative ecological, social, and economic impact of microplastic on the world.

4. The stances of involved nations:

a. China

As China is one of the biggest contributors to microplastic, these small pieces are widely abundant in the coastal areas of the country -- from the southwest (Beibu Gulf and China Sea) to the southeast (Oujiang, Jiaojiang, and Minjiang estuaries), and from the southeast to the northeast (Bohai Sea). The concentration of microplastics in the Bohai sea due to the increasing presence of industries, urbanised areas, tourism-related industries, and closed nature of the Bohai sea provides a greater opportunity for the accumulation of microplastics as reported by Yu et al.

China produces more than 60 million tonnes of plastic a year, but its recycling rate is only around 30%. Adding onto that, China and Hong Kong have collectively imported 72.4% of global traded plastic waste, increasing the microplastic pollution produced by the country. To tackle this issue, China stated that it will promote 'green' plastic products and take action against the overuse of plastic in packaging and agriculture. Furthermore, China created a 'five-year plan' from 2021 to 2025 which encourages retailers and delivery companies to reduce the consumption of 'unreasonable' plastic packaging and raise waste urban incineration rates to ~850,000 tonnes per day by 2025. China also stated that it will ban the production of ultra-thin plastic bags nationwide as well as personal care products that contain plastic microbeads which are already banned in the United States and Europe.

b. Germany

As the third-largest plastic producer in 2022, Germany produces 14.48 million tons of plastic waste per year and 31,239 tons of plastic litter has a high chance of entering waterways. Its daily plastic waste per person is one of the world's highest – at 0.46 kg. Of all the packaging waste generated, 45.3% comes from private end-consumers.

There was research conducted by the German Environmental Ministry and the Robert Koch Institute which found out that 97-100% of blood and urine samples were collected from 2,500 children between 3 to 17 of age between 2014 and 2017 which showed plastic toxicity. This illustrates the severity of the situation and how citizens are affected by a country's decision regarding microplastic management. However,

Germany's Environment Ministry introduced a five-point plan in 2018 that aims to reduce the country's plastic waste.

c. France

Though France is part of the P5, there is little information regarding microplastic pollution on France's Atlantic coast. This lack of knowledge makes it considerably harder to establish the extent of microplastic pollution and estimate the potential danger to people and ecosystems. However, French researchers have found microplastic (5-20 micrometres) at a mountain top in the French Pyrenees and suggested that the plastics may have crossed continents and oceans. The sample showed a marine source that came out of the ocean and managed to get into the free troposphere. This finding illustrates that particles can circulate the world and reach even the most remote regions. After using technology, the team determined that the most abundant type of plastic in the microplastic samples was polyethene, which is commonly used in plastic packaging. Shipping off plastic waste to other parts of the world does not keep HICs safe from microplastic pollution and contamination. 'There are no borders in nature,' – Steve Allen.

To combat this issue, France stated that they will ban plastic packaging for nearly all fruits and vegetables from January 2022 onwards. This change is estimated to prevent more than 1 billion items of plastic packaging per year.

d. Japan

As one of the largest consumers of plastics, Japan generates around 7.99 tonnes of plastic waste and more than 143,000 tonnes of plastic litter per year. Research shows that the country has more than 18,000 miles of microplastic on the coastline. Critics point out that Japan's obsession with hygiene causes many foods to be overwrapped and bagged in multiple layers of plastic which causes contamination and pollution. Before 2017, Japan shipped a portion of its plastic waste to China, but after the Chinese government banned the practice, they began shipping their waste to lower-middle-income countries such as Indonesia and Vietnam. However, some suggest that these poorer countries are incapable of disposing of plastic properly, as they allow waste to enter the ocean. This microplastic

contamination is entering the food chain, contaminating fish stocks. The government plans to reduce domestic plastic waste by 25% by 2030.

e. Russian Federation

Russia produces around 5.84 million tons of plastic per year. According to research published in *Water Resources*, the waters of Russia's Lake Baikal are contaminated with high levels of microplastic particles and fibres which are most likely from packaging waste and fishing nets. Up to 36.3 pieces of microplastic are found per kg of dry sediment in the Baltic Sea branches in Russia.

There were 3 large-scaled aquatic environment plastic clean-up operations that took place in 2017 with volunteers in Russia that collected over 2 tonnes of plastic at Monchegorsk Lake, Nickel City river, and Murmansk Sea. However, these efforts need to be on a larger scale to become effective due to Russia's size and population. According to the UN Environment's European Regional Coordinator Mahir Aliyev, there needs to be international and supranational coordination to occur to reduce the amount of plastic that ends up in Russia's waters.

f. United States (US)

The U.S. is the second-largest country to produce the most quantity of plastic at 38 million tonnes, yet only a measly 9% of the plastic they produce is recycled. In 2018, the Plastic Pollution Coalition reported that the U.S. exported 157 thousand, 1.07 million kg, of shipping containers filled with plastic waste. Some of these plastics were shipped to HICs which were able to manage the waste, but larger quantities of waste were also shipped to LICs which have a harder time doing so.

In a case study, the researchers found out that the waters surrounding Florida (the Gulf of Mexico on the west and the Atlantic Ocean on the East) are heavily polluted with debris including microplastics as a result of anthropogenic activities. To address this pressing issue, the U.S. Congress passed Public Law 114-114 to ban the sale of cosmetics containing plastic microbeads – the most common type of microplastic found in aquatic ecosystems.

5. Possible solutions:

The threat of plastics and especially microplastics entering the marine environment require targeted actions. Countries have implemented a variety of environmentally friendly fiscal policies to ensure the plastic waste will be disposed of properly and the plastic waste produced in the country will see a decline in the upcoming years due to the different challenges they cause as microplastic invade our lives, yet most have been rendered futile or not enough to see actual progress. Microplastic has caused many environmental, economical, and social issues as seen above. Breaking free from plastic and reducing microplastic pollution will be a step forward to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and strengthening climate resiliency. Many environmental NGOs such as Green Peace points out that it is up to nations to shift the responsibility for waste management and recycling to manufacturers and producers, prohibit plastic waste from being exported to developing countries, place a moratorium on new and expanding plastic facilities until the Environmental Protection Agency updates and creates vital environmental and health regulations on those facilities etc.

It is up to different nations to establish policies and objectives that best suit their own countries, taking into consideration how much primary and secondary plastic is emitted from their country and the impacts they cause regarding environmental, economic, and social aspects. Delegates should strive to find unique and creative solutions to the pressing issue of microplastic solutions throughout the world. As part of the ECOSOC committee, delegates have to ensure the wellbeing of citizens in each respective country and take into consideration of the environmental impacts while trying to uplift their economies as a result of microplastic pollution.

6. Conclusion:

This paper aims to provide delegates with an overview of the topic regarding microplastic pollution throughout the world. Delegates should be aware that this chair paper does not include all aspects of the topic and is free to incorporate their own research using this paper as a base. Delegates are reminded to keep in mind both long term and short term policies previously implemented as well as develop their own

creative solutions. Microplastic pollution is a prevalent issue worldwide, and economic issues stemming from these pollutions will always exist as not all countries are on the same starting point. It is up to the delegates to choose solutions that benefit their country and hopefully, other countries as well.

7. Questions to Consider:

- a. How should the microplastic solution be addressed?
- b. What is the country's stance regarding microplastic pollution and what past actions did they take regarding this issue?
- c. Who are vulnerable groups impacted within the country and what policies can the government implement to help them?
- d. Are there ways to help improve economies of LICs as they are hit the hardest because of microplastic pollution? Where would the funding come from?
- e. How can the government of each respective country limit microplastic pollution and provide economic relief to citizens and businesses affected by it?

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