

CLIENT ALERT

Calls for Treaty on Marine Litter Continue During World Oceans Week

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While the COVID-19 pandemic has forced the postponement or cancellation of many in-person events around the world, the push for a new global agreement to address marine litter and microplastics is continuing via virtual and online meetings. On June 8th the United Nations (U.N.) hosted a [day-long event](#), to kick off World Oceans week. The President of the U.N. General Assembly, Tijjani Muhammad Bande, called attention to the issue of marine litter in his 2020 message, stating “This year we must take action to prevent a further eight million tons of plastic waste from entering the ocean and protect global ecosystems. We simply cannot stand by while oceans acidify, sea levels rise and pollution increases.”

The need to continue efforts to combat marine litter and advance discussions at the international level was underscored in many of the events held throughout the week. An online forum was led by the U.N. Environment Assembly (UNEA) President and Norwegian Minister of Climate and Environment, Sveinung Rotevatn from June 7th - 10th. The “[Act #ForNature Forum](#)”, brought together representatives from governments, the business sector and civil society to discuss ocean pollution, with Norway and many within the NGO community advocating for the need of a new global agreement on marine litter and microplastics.

Other organizations such as the [Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation \(APEC\)](#) forum have advocated for improving waste collection and management systems as the fastest way to prevent and reduce marine litter in the near-term. In 2019 APEC Ministers endorsed the [APEC Roadmap on Marine Debris](#) and Malaysia, as the host economy for APEC in 2020, selected “driving innovative sustainability” and “innovative waste management through circular economy” as a top priority this year. For Malaysia, the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the need to transition to a more circular economy in which waste is viewed as a resource per a recent [report](#) from APEC’s Policy Support Unit. Upcoming [meetings in August](#) (either online or in-person) will provide opportunities for government officials and businesses to discuss the policies needed to enable more circular systems and prevent waste from entering the environment.

For more information, please contact the professional(s) listed below, or your regular Crowell & Moring contact.

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