



Cleaner Oceans for a Sustainable Blue Economy

Thematic Track

Session 1- Countering ocean litter: sustainable waste management in India

Marine litter is becoming a global challenge, a phenomenon faced by coastal cities all around the world. This over time has snowballed leading to accumulation of marine debris and impacting the marine ecosystem. Approximately 90% of the marine litter found in the shorelines is made up of plastics, cigarette butts, polyethene bags, fishing gear and remains of food and beverage containers. This has serious implications on our marine environment. Over the last few years, the increase in the number of micro beads and single use plastics have further worsened the situation. This calls for immediate action, considering the impact on the marine life and ocean resources.

Research has documented that the leakage of plastic waste happens at every stage, right from its generation phase to its usage and final disposal. Some of the pertinent reasons responsible for such a leakage include improper management of solid waste and waste water. Research has highlighted that improper management of land based plastic waste is the largest contributor to marine litter accounting to more than 80% of plastics in oceans¹. India's coastal marine environment is under a constant stress. A large number of activities contribute to the problem of marine litter like loss of fishing debris, release of untreated or partially treated waste that comes from domestic or industrial areas. Furthermore, use of beaches for recreation and tourism activities heavily contributes to the massive amount of plastic ending up in India's marine environment¹. India has been taking measured yet decisive steps towards mitigation of this challenge. The Plastic waste management rules were notified in 2016. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on World Environment Day 2018, announced that India is committed towards defeating

¹ https://cms.org.in/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Ocean-Plastic-Report-2019_CMS-1-1.pdf

single use plastics in India² and that it targets eliminating all the single use plastics by 2022. The urgent problem that requires our attention now is lack of infrastructure and sound waste management practices in coastal cities. The focus should not only be on plastic removal, but on the creation of economic models, development of strategies and proper prediction of future consumption patterns. Additionally, we should also strive for better waste management practices, prioritizing circular economy and suggesting innovative ways to deal with this predicament.

The thematic track will further aim to deliberate on India's response to marine plastic pollution and potential solutions to address the same by focusing on aligning national policy, role of Extended Producers Responsibility, innovations in technology, role of stakeholders including NGOs, private organizations, donor agencies, and national & local government bodies.

Key questions/comments

- India's response and policy climate with regards to Marine litter
- City Readiness in understanding and handling marine litter related aspects
- Focus on the need for improvement in infrastructure to curb marine litter in coastal cities
- Roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders in India
- Role for increased EPR and industry participation in India
- Role of innovation and technology

Session II - Blue Economy -India's road to a greener future

The Report of Blue Economy Working Group on National Accounting Framework and Ocean Governance by the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister of India provides a working definition of Blue Economy as - "Blue economy refers to exploring and optimizing the potential of the oceans and seas which are under India's legal jurisdiction for socio-economic development while preserving the health of the oceans". The report also states that "Blue Economy by India is comprehensive in the sense that it covers many dimensions of the ocean activities – a) occurrence of activities – activities in the coastal and off-shore region, b) within country's economic jurisdiction, c) integrated approach of blending development with sustainability, and d) all these activities keeping in view health of the oceans." In 2019-20, Blue economy was part of the financial year budget highlighting its

The need for cleaner oceans is necessary to maintain a healthy ecosystem and enhancing sustainability in blue economy sectors would be essential to ensure preservation and conservation of oceans. Some key sectors that could significantly contribute to sustainable development while contributing to economic growth are – Fisheries and Coastal Tourism, both sectors have been affected by the current pandemic, however both sectors are critical to achieve the blue economy aspirations of India. India is also gearing ahead in R & D innovations

India is the second largest aquaculture fish producer in the world and contributes about 7 per cent to the global fish production. The country is also home to more than 10 per cent of the global fish biodiversity and is one of the 17-mega biodiversity rich countries (NFDB 2020a). The fisheries sector

² <https://www.deccanherald.com/national/india-join-clean-seas-campaign-pm-673495.html>

provides livelihood to about 16 million fishers and fish farmers at the primary level and almost twice the number along the value chain (NFDB 2020b). Overfishing, Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing practices are leading to significant stresses on the largely artisanal fishing in the country. Additionally, the lack of access to sustainable fishing technologies also poses a challenge for fisherman. The role of the fishing community in preserving ocean health is tremendous and vital to conserve biodiversity through community level participation and interventions.

The travel & tourism sector in India accounted for 9.3 per cent of the total employment opportunities generated in the country in 2016, providing employment to around 40.3 million people during the same year (WTTC 2017). India's eight beaches across five states and two UTs have been awarded the prestigious 'Blue Flag' certification also. 'Blue Flag' is one of the world's most recognised voluntary award for beaches, marinas, and sustainable boating tourism operators and it is a representation of India's conservation and sustainable development efforts in the coastal regions. Coastal Tourism is one of major areas that India would like to develop and enhance under the blue economy framework, yet the current coastal tourism in the country is largely focused leisure tourism. Eco-tourism will provide significant revenues to the country and these revenues are critical for conservation efforts. The global coral reef tourism is over a 30 billion dollar business that also funnel conservation and preservation efforts. With unique and high density of corals around Anadaman and Nicobar and over 7% of the world's mangroves, coastal and eco-tourism will be a value addition to India's tourism sector. India's coastal tourism sites are experiencing significant pollution and are also facing biodiversity loss due to extreme climatic changes. There is a need to reduce pollution and harness sustainability practices in the coastal tourism sector to ensure its future.

Key questions

- What are the major technologies or innovations that would help address sustainability concerns in the fishery sector?
- How can businesses be involved in ocean sustainability initiatives while earning an income for their efforts?
- What are the new avenues in fisheries and coastal tourism with prospects for job creation?
- How can ecosystem services and coastal tourism be aligned to ensure sustainability and economic growth?