

'Plastics Sectoral Forum – For a Clean Ocean' turns one year in behalf of the environment

Plastivida, in partnership with Oceanographic Institute of the University of São Paulo has been acting in order to mitigate marine litter and promote actions on environmental education, conscious consumption and good practices of waste disposal.

On the verge of turning one year, the 'Plastics Sectoral Forum – For a Clean Ocean' is a milestone when it comes to Brazilian plastic industry especially in plastic production on the grounds that it can figure out the origin of marine litter, interacts with many other sectors and proposes actions to mitigate this global problem. With actions involving different publics – population, industries and public power – the forum has been acting both on an international and national basis with the aim to contribute to change the current scenario.

In 2012, after becoming a signatory of the 'Global Declaration of Plastics Industry' – a global movement of the sector in favor of marine environment preservation – Plastivida signed a partnership with the Oceanographic Institute of the University of São Paulo (IOUSP) in order to carry out a technical-scientific project on the issue. Along the years, a great deal of scientific studies and activities have been carried out by IOUSP in partnership with Plastivida aiming at mapping and gathering technical information on this issue in Brazil.

At first, there was a large national and international bibliographic survey of scientific articles on the issue. Among those initial activities, we sought to identify the magnitude of the problem related to waste accumulation, patterns regarding their distribution and main generating sources, the methodology approaches used and, mainly, the trends in terms of monitoring applied in other countries so that we could compare to what is done in Brazil.

The waste in Brazilian beaches (SP, BA and AL) have been diagnosed and monitored to establish time-series data and know the size and characteristics of this problem in here as well as to measure the contribution of Brazil to the global problem and find out the origin of waste in oceans and beaches in Brazil.

Another important result of that partnership was the 'Zero Pellet' Program – created from a plastics global production chain initiative - which carried out thorough analysis, mapping and understanding of the different processes of plastic pellet loss to marine environment by taking into account the whole plastics production chain in Brazil resulting in the Brazilian version of

'Zero Pellets' Guidelines, adapted to our reality and being discussed and analyzed within the sector.

A diagnosis of pollution in Guanabara Bay was also conducted and its results indicate that the presence of plastic waste is just 'the tip of the iceberg', that is, plastics account for the visible part of pollution. The remaining parts correspond to domestic sewage, drugs, industrial agriculture and urban waste among others, 'which shows us that the problem of marine litter is larger than it seems to be', states professor and researcher Alexandre Turra of IOUSP who has been coordinating activities along with Plastivida since 2012.

One of the educational actions is a project led by IOUSP and Plastivida named 'UndersTent Litter' that develops activities to the population involving technical information, studies on the situation of marine litter as well as material collection and recycling. During the activities, visitors take part in a practical process of waste sample collection to follow up the observation of characteristics and origin of the material collected. Based on the resulting information, educators encourage reflections on possible strategies to solve the problem. The first tent was set in partnership with 'Tomorrow Museum' (RJ) during the Olympic and Paralympic Games and the project is still ongoing on the Brazilian coast.

The 'Plastics Sectoral Forum – For a Clean Ocean' promotes various interactions and events at schools and universities to inform the population not only about the causes and impacts of marine litter, but especially about alternatives ordinary people may have to actively participate in the search for solutions to the problem.

One of the conclusions these studies has drawn is that a large part of the waste that gets to the oceans come from inland. 'In this respect, one of the Forum actions is taken along with the public power when it comes to waste management, while when it refers to environmental education: conscious consumption, selective collection, reuse and recycling the Forum takes actions with the population in general', states Miguel Bahiense, president of Plastivida. He adds: 'it doesn't matter what we find in the oceans - either plastic or not, recyclable or not - it shouldn't be there. We need to act in the name of awareness raising in order to avoid inappropriate discharge, whichever the product is, from a tire to a bottle, plastic or not, for instance. We, as citizens, are part of the process'.

Another conclusion drawn was that marine litter issue is considered a cross-sector problem, which means that there is vast variety of waste. 'This way, marine environment degradation is closely connected to poor management of urban solid waste either in the surrounding areas of the oceans or even on the coast cities, after all, rivers, sooner or later, flow into the ocean', states Turra.

The 'Plastics Sectoral Forum – For a Clean Ocean' gathers 16 institutions so far: Plastivida, Abief, Abiplast, Abiquim, Abrade, Adirplast, Braskem, Dow, Instituto Brasileiro do PVC, Simperj, Sempesc, Simplás, Simplavi, Sindiplast, Sinplast, Sinproquim. In addition, it has an online platform that has been grouping information together since 2012, besides proposals regarding environmental education, prevention, collection and recycling, and for this reason it has become a useful tool for the sector actions (www.porummarlimpo.org.br).

A global issue - This activity is carried out in accordance with the Federal Government by means of the Coastal Zone Management of the Ministry of Environment Department of Territory Zoning which, indeed, has been present in the launch of Plastics Industry Forum – For a Clean Ocean. Turra takes part in the Integration Group of the Coastal Zone Management National Program in which he has been promoting discussions on the issue.

Plastics Sectoral Forum also gets involved in and follows up ongoing actions on an international basis, which demands the participation of Brazil. G7 action plan to combat marine litter is being implemented with support of the World Bank by using a systematic approach through the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) from 2017 to 2022. As a consequence of such initiative a G20 workshop is being scheduled for 2017 in order to address the subject.

Another event of utmost importance is the Ocean Conference that took place at the United Nations headquarters in June 2017, coincidentally on Oceans Day. This meeting will back up the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources in which the subject matter of waste is extremely relevant.

Alongside it, a counseling group for UNEA 3 assessment (United Nations Environmental Assembly) was created aiming at identifying strategies, approaches and regulations in international, regional and sub-regional context to combat marine litter as well as micro plastics. This process will occur throughout 2017 with UNEA predicted to be held in December.

Those actions and discussions will have the opportunity to be spread and strengthened during the 6th International Marine Debris Conference to be held in San Diego in March 2018.

'Brazil plays an important role in this scenario and, therefore, the internal and multisector structuring (apart from plastics) is necessary as well as the sharing of responsibility among industry, retail, public power and society so that everyone is aware of their roles as consumers and waste managers in behalf of not only marine preservation but also of the whole Planet.

To get further information, sign the Declaration of Intent and participate in this movement, access: www.porummarlimpo.org.br.



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About Plastivida – Plastivida is a social-environmental institute for plastics which by means of environmental education discloses precise and scientific information about plastics, their properties, applications, recyclability, and their appropriate and responsible disposal aiming at contributing to the social and environmental development. Other information can be obtained at www.plastivida.org.br.

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