

# MARINE LITTER: A PROBLEM OF GLOBAL CONCERN

## What is marine litter?

Marine litter can be defined as any persistent manufactured or processed solid material that is discarded, disposed of or abandoned in the marine and coastal environment. It is generated due to intentional or accidental discharges, and can also enter the sea when blown by winds or washed out via rivers and storm drains. It may be visible (macro litter), hardly visible or even invisible (micro litter)...

## Why is marine litter a problem?

- It is a threat to wildlife and ecosystems: Litter items kill or cause suffering to marine mammals, reptiles, fish and seabirds that are trapped in them or mistake them for food.
- It is a threat to human health and livelihood: Litter in the sea and on beaches can cause, among others, serious injuries and damages.
- It can cause bio-accumulation of pollutants and toxins. Any toxins leaching from litter items may build up in an organism, or pass from one organism to another through the food chain.
- It travels long distances: Travelling with sea currents, waves, winds and runoffs, it can be found in places very far from its source. Often species "hitchhike" on litter items.
- It is long lived: A single plastic bottle poses threats to sea life and people for hundreds of years -the time it takes to degrade in the sea.
- It is difficult to track: It is almost impossible to follow the route and fate of a litter item: where it started, what happened along the way and why it ended up where it did.
- It is out of sight, out of reach: Micro litter is invisible due to its small size. Heavy macro litter items at the bottom of the sea are out of sight. Both are almost impossible to remove.

## Why is marine litter a problem?

Marine litter is found in all seas and coasts around the world... lying on shores ... floating anywhere from the surface to the bottom of the sea ... even in the most pristine environments far away from any human settlements.

Marine Litter has a truly global distribution, it is a problem with no borders ...