**GCRF PLASTIC POLLUTION GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK NETWORK PROJECT**

**- SOME PERSPECTIVES**

Carl Dalhammar and Leonidas Milios, Lund University

Plastics are ubiquitous in society, and increasingly find their way into natural ecosystems. Frequently, various research reports and media outlets highlight the problem of plastic pollution that found scattered from remote beaches to the deepest oceans, and even in our drinking water in the form of micro plastics. Meanwhile, plastics are an indispensable part of a modern society, having a multitude of useful functions of society. However, despite that plastics offer many solutions, they also generate many problems.

One challenge of utilizing plastics is the dependence on fossil feedstock, resulting in emissions of greenhouse gases which is not compatible with the Paris Agreement. Other challenges are insufficient waste management and leakage into the environment, both of which have caused increasing amounts of plastics in nature with partially unknown effects. Therefore, plastics are associated with a number of sustainability challenges, which are very hard to address systematically through public policy. One reason is that different actors may have slightly different ideas on what the main solutions to the plastic issue may be (e g bio-based and biodegradable plastics, increasing recycling rates of plastic waste, more standardized plastic materials, replacement of plastics with other materials, getting rid of single-use products etc.).

Further, there is an emerging direction towards a mix of various policies and practices to address plastic-related problems (e g bans or levies on plastics bags, producer responsibility schemes for plastic packaging and fishing gears, bans on several single-use products, and rules regulating the use of microbeads in cosmetic products), aimed at different actors in different jurisdictions. Plastic leakage in the environment is an issue that transcends borders, and plastics need to be regulated at multiple levels, from regional to global. Therefore, there is a need for harmonization of good practices, within and across jurisdictions (e g the case of local bans in California), to identify leaders and learn from best practice. Since plastic pollution is inevitably connected to national waste policies and laws, there is a need to better understand and analyze the different waste management options to achieve greater sustainability outcomes, prioritizing solutions that would be viable within the regional context and in line with international conventions.

The global generation of plastic waste is constantly increasing, with the geographical focus gradually shifting towards the global South where fast developing economies are predicted to grow in the coming decades. Considerable increase in population growth, income level, changes in consumption patterns, and the influx of rural dwellers to urban centers are strong drivers for the increased use of plastics. Being an inexpensive and versatile material, plastic is expected to proliferate rapidly in these regions, and so is the need for better waste management and sustainable solutions.

Consequently, there is a need for more networking and spreading of best practice related to policy objectives and policy interventions, and behavior-oriented solutions. Also, more knowledge is needed on context-dependent factors that influence policy design and success, to tackle effectively the management of plastic pollution.

The GCRF network is well placed to address the identified challenges. The focus on a global knowledge network and, the development of solutions that take the political economy into account and stresses local level actions, is very much in line with what is needed.

We look forward to learn more about various initiatives around the world, and contribute with our knowledge of European practices.