Preventing Microplastic Pollution at Source

KIMO Resolution 2026/1

Adopted by KIMO's Assembly of Delegates on 7 October 2026

PREAMBLE

Recognising that microplastics—synthetic polymer particles smaller than 5 mm— are now widely detected in marine ecosystems, freshwater, soils, the atmosphere and in food and drinking water, and are increasingly recognised as a potential risk to human health through ingestion and inhalation;

Concerned that microplastics originate from both intentional uses (such as plastic confetti, balloons, glitter and some antifouling paints) and unintentional releases (including textile microfibres, artificial sports pitch infill, tyre wear particles, pellet loss, paint/coating abrasion and weathering, which represent a significant and often under-recognized source of pollution), and that these sources collectively threaten biodiversity, fisheries, tourism, and community wellbeing;

Noting that existing EU frameworks, such as the REACH 2023/2055 microplastics restriction, the Single-Use Plastics Directive, the Zero Pollution Action Plan and the EU Textile Strategy, address some sources of microplastics but leave significant regulatory gaps, and that continued alignment between UK and EU chemical regulation is essential to prevent regulatory divergence and environmental leakage;

Recalling KIMO's previous resolutions on microfibres, artificial sports pitches, and plastic confetti, and affirming the need for a consolidated and forward-looking position that reflects current science and policy developments;

KIMO International therefore adopts the following resolution.

OVERARCHING AMBITIONS

KIMO International calls on national governments and the European Union to:

1. Prioritise prevention at source by eliminating avoidable microplastic uses and promoting product design that minimises emissions.

2. Close critical regulatory gaps across intentional releases, intentionally added microplastics and unintentional emissions.

3. Promote sustainable design and circularity through stronger eco-design rules, material standards and extended producer responsibility.

4. Improve monitoring and data harmonisation across terrestrial, riverine and marine environments to support informed policy and enforcement

5. Ensure regulatory alignment across regulatory jurisdictions within and beyond the EU, including between the EU and the UK and across devolved administrations.

6. Strengthen knowledge on human health impacts by supporting research on microplastics in marine and coastal environments and associated exposure pathways, including seafood, drinking water and air.

7. Apply the precautionary principle by acting where scientific certainty is incomplete.

INTENTIONALLY RELEASED MICROPLASTICS

International Actions

- Ensure that intentionally released microplastics, such as plastic confetti and balloon releases, are included in the UK's Singe-Use Plastic Ban and the EU's revised Single-Use Plastics Directive so that non-EU and EU Member States implement a consistent phase-out.

While We Wait – National & Local Actions

- Ban the sale and use of plastic confetti and similar intentionally dispersed microplastics (national/local).
- Prohibit balloon releases at public and private events (national/local).
- Promote sustainable, non-plastic celebration alternatives (local).

INTENTIONALLY ADDED MICROPLASTICS

International Actions

- Accelerate the phase-out of polymeric infill for sports pitches and ensure strict enforcement.
- Develop eco-design standards to eliminate intentionally added microplastics across coatings, paint, consumer products and sports surfaces.
- Support research and innovation for microplastic-free marine coatings and low-impact material alternatives.

While We Wait – National & Local Actions

- Advocate for restrictions and phaseout of products with intentionally added microplastics where viable alternatives exist, including antifouling applications and polymer particles on sports pitches (National).

- Prioritize procurement of microplastic-free alternatives in marinas, ports, sports facilities and public services (National/Local).

UNINTENTIONALLY RELEASED MICROPLASTICS

International Actions

- Establish and enforce requirements to reduce microplastic emissions from key sources, including textiles, tyre wear, paint and coating abrasion and weathering, synthetic turf fibre abrasion and industrial pellet handling, with harmonized standards.

- Require that paint-related activities, including hull cleaning, sanding, blasting and coating removal are carried out only in controlled environments, supported by international standards and harmonised enforcement.

- Develop harmonised methodologies for monitoring unintentional microplastic emissions.

- Fund research on microplastic capture technologies and sustainable material alternatives.

While We Wait – National & Local Actions

- Mandate microfibre filters on all new washing machines through regulatory measures (National)

- Promote the use of low-emission paints and best practices for maintenance, cleaning and coating-related works in ports and harbours (Local)

- Ensure that appropriate facilities and requirements are in place so that hull cleaning, sanding and coating removal are carried out in controlled environments with effective capture and filtration systems (National/local)

- Strengthen stormwater and wastewater infrastructure to capture microplastics and prevent them from reaching rivers and coastal waters (National/local)