Message in a plastic bottle:

Services that support the clean-up of marine debris

Marine debris includes plastic and other litter, discarded and lost fishing equipment, industrial rubbish and other human-created waste that enters the seas and oceans.

The 2020 report for APEC's Oceans and Fisheries Working Group (OFWG) estimated the economic costs of marine debris – including to tourism, to fishing, and shipping – at around US$10.8 billion for the APEC region. The report further noted **at current estimated leakage rates of debris into the oceans the projected value of damage to these industries to 2050 is US$216 billion.** If the volume of marine debris entering the ocean accelerates (and global plastic production is predicted to triple by 2050), then this number would increase.

Plastic waste alone accounts for over 80 percent of marine debris, and **by 2050 it is projected there will be more plastics than fish in the oceans**. Further, the increased use of plastics during the COVID-19 pandemic has raised concerns that the crisis is leading to even more plastic waste reaching the environment. **The ongoing global pandemic has been a setback to the momentum to address plastic pollution**.

The clear starting point of managing plastic waste is to stop it entering waterways and discharging into the ocean in the first place. **A global effort is also required to clean up plastic that has reached the ocean and to stop further pollution**. Noting the sobering statistics on plastics in our region, **it is critical to remove restrictions on trade, investment and the temporary movement of people needed to engage in debris clean-up services**.

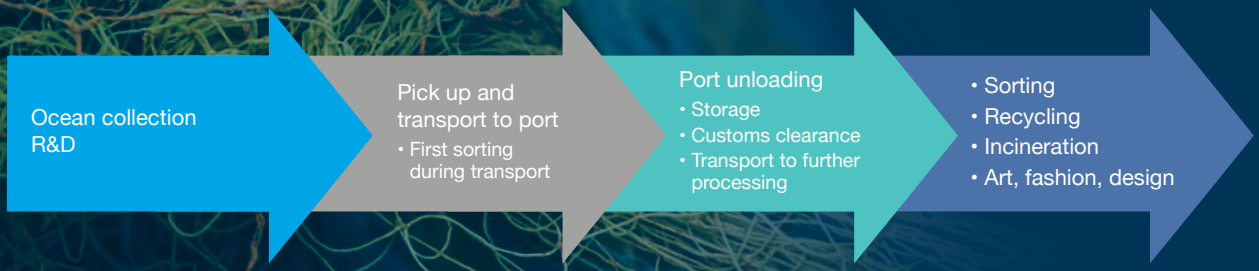
The APEC report "Services that support the clean-up of marine debris", commissioned by the Group on Services, found there are significant trade and investment barriers to the providers who are seeking to clean up marine debris.

It found APEC economies can assist in the clean-up of marine debris by:

- **facilitating the duty-free importation of goods**
- **facilitating the ability of marine debris experts to work in markets throughout the APEC region**
- **encouraging mutual recognition of professional qualifications to support the movement of professional services suppliers**
- **coordinating domestic regulation, and**
- **addressing controls on cross border data (see detailed findings overleaf)**.

Solutions require a new supply chain for cleaning up marine debris that extends across borders and covers multiple activities. **APEC's importance as a regional forum gives economies a strategic position to drive efforts on understanding the impacts and costs of marine debris, and developing the required management and prevention approaches to mitigate its impediments to sustainable economic growth in the Asia-Pacific**.

The proposed new marine debris cleanup supply chain



A pathway to a cleaner ocean

	State of play	Recommendations
Waste trade	Marine debris collection could be classified as a remediation or waste collection service. Only 51 members (9 APEC) have made GATS commitments on this. Some economies prohibit imports of waste.	• Remove barriers to trade and investment in remediation services, including making technical standards interoperable. • Allow imports of debris under Basel Convention limits.
People movement	Clean-up services providers need to deploy permanent staff, specialist researchers and even volunteers across borders, facing different visa and entry rules. There are diverging qualification requirements, lack of mutual recognition and restrictions on commercial association between regulated professions.	• Permit temporary entry and stay for clean-up staff and researchers. • Advance work on mutual recognition of qualifications for engineers and other relevant professionals, building on existing APEC initiatives. • Remove restrictions on professionals engaged in cross-border projects.
Port access	Debris shipment to ports can face trade barriers, including discriminatory access, tariffs and requirement for a local office.	• Accord non-discrimination in access to and payment for port services. • Remove requirements for local offices.
Shipping	Ocean clean-up services may face restrictions on chartering foreign vessels.	• Ease rules on vessel chartering for research and clean-up.
Supply chains	The supply chain from collection to recycling or incineration may face bottlenecks.	• Clean-up services should have access to local waste management systems and infrastructure.
Data collection	Ocean clean-up services require data on debris origins, composition, movement and impact from many sources ranging from government agencies to volunteers.	• Remove data localisation rules. • Coordinate debris data monitoring among economies. • Publish information via open data policies.
Entry of goods and equipment	Clean-up services providers often need to bring equipment into new jurisdictions temporarily, exposing them to complex customs and tariff refund procedures and different product and process standards.	• Allow for duty-free temporary imports of equipment and instruments for clean-up and research on marine debris.
Domestic regulation	The market for marine debris services is underdeveloped. Markets have many types of actors and have complex local, domestic and possibly international regulations.	• Create a market for debris services through coordinated domestic regulation. • Develop voluntary standards for service providers.
International coordination	Marine debris is dispersed across jurisdictions. A global effort is required to clean up plastic that has reached the ocean and to stop further pollution.	• Follow developments on an international legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution to ensure proposed actions align with goals.

Further information: APEC Group on Services Policy Brief on Trade in Marine-debris Collection Services.

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