

International Marine Organization

"The sea is the universal sewer where all kinds of pollution end up conveyed by rain from the atmosphere and from the mainland." Jacques Cousteau, marine biologist

Topic B: "The new dumpster: the ocean. Addressing the illegal dumping of toxic waste from the hotel industry around the world"

The dumping of untreated toxic waste into our oceans by coastal hotels around the planet is causing significant harm to marine ecosystems and human health. This dangerous practice is being driven by irresponsible waste disposal policies, lack of sustainability initiatives, and poor compliance with environmental regulations by the hotel industry. Urgent action is required to combat this major threat to our seas.

There are multiple causes to this problem. A leading cause is the inadequate waste management infrastructure and practices by many hotels, especially in developing nations. According to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), over 80% of the world's sewage is discharged untreated, with coastal hotels being a major source (UNEP, 2022). The UNEP also found that globally, over 90% of sewage and wastewater from hotels is dumped directly into oceans rather than treated properly (UNEP, 2015). This is due to the lack of facilities, technology, expertise, and investment in modern waste management systems.

Additionally, weak enforcement of anti-dumping laws has enabled hotels to discharge waste irresponsibly without consequence into the ocean. Some hotels view illegal dumping as a cost-cutting measure, prioritizing profits over sustainability. The lack of internal policies and government regulations also contribute to uncontrolled dumping of hazardous sewage, chemicals, plastics and food waste into the seas.

In Indonesia and Thailand, a study done in 2019 revealed that over 60% of their hotels dumped wastewater directly into the ocean. In the Philippines, it is estimated that 70% of sewage is dumped into the coast untreated because of the lack of governmental regulations

The environmental and health impacts of hotel toxic dumping are extremely concerning. Nutrient pollution from sewage triggers harmful algal blooms that create marine dead zones, according to National Geographic (2021). Toxins released by hotels get ingested by fish and bioaccumulate up the food chain until they reach the seafood humans consume, causing health risks. Cancun in Mexico is a clear example of this. The algal bloom in Cancun has become a massive problem for the environment and tourism, since it consumes oxygen from the sea and blocks sunlight, leaving the area inhabitable for any

aquatic living thing. Also, because of the massive amount of algae, beaches from Cancun are completely covered by algae making it really unattractive for tourists, plus the smell of putrefaction of the dead algae is not very appealing.

Plastics and toxic waste from hotels also wash up on beaches, degrading tourism economies. The UN World Tourism Organization states that tourism is one of the main factors to the spread of diseases and pollution in the touristic areas (UNWTO, 2023).

Some of the solutions that have already been given are: “Protecting the Marine Environment from Land-Based Pollution through Strengthened Coordination of Global Action.” Launched by UNEP in January 2019 for a 5 year period the objective of the project is to improve responses to land-based pollution, strengthen collaboration and promote action to address wastewater pollution issues. The Global Partnership on Plastic Pollution and Marine Litters (GPML) has also implemented a project in which marks a formal acknowledgement of the wider purpose of the partnership, encompassing prevention and reduction strategies throughout the entire lifecycle of plastics.

If this issue is not addressed soon, beaches will start to become an unsafe environment for people. The sea life around the coast will start to suffer alterations in the water pH, density and chemistry killing thousands of species and making it uninhabitable for marine life.

The world is facing a major crisis from hotels worldwide dumping untreated toxic waste into one of our biggest treasures: oceans. The health of entire marine ecosystems and human populations are at stake because of the toxins being dumped into the ocean and being consumed, or even simply exposed to. The International Marine Organization calls upon all nations to urgent cooperation and the need to take action to enact stricter regulations, rigorous enforcement, proper facilities and sustainable practices in the hotel industry. Investing in modern waste management infrastructure must become a priority, Action must be immediate and comprehensive, before irreparable damage is done.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- How can this problem be addressed using international law?
- What are the current regulations for hotels and water treatment?
- Is sewage dumping an illegal practice?
- What regulations or laws can be established?
- Are the current projects having any effect?
- How does your country protect the seas?

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