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**United Nations
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Programme**

**Ad hoc open-ended expert group
on marine litter and microplastics
Third meeting**
Bangkok, 18–22 November 2019

**Report of the third meeting of the ad hoc open-ended expert
group on marine litter and microplastics**

I. Introduction

1. The third meeting of the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics was held at the headquarters of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, from 18 to 22 November 2019.
2. Participants heard videotaped messages from Mr. Ola Elvestuen, Minister for Climate and Environment, Norway, and President of the upcoming fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, and from Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), as well as a welcome message from Ms. Dechen Tsering, UNEP Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific.
3. In his remarks, Mr. Elvestuen described marine litter as one of the fastest-growing environmental problems, with serious impacts on the health of oceans and marine ecosystems. He recalled that the United Nations Environment Assembly at its third session had underlined the importance of completely stopping the discharge of litter and microplastics into the ocean.
4. In her statement, Ms. Andersen said that the meeting was part of a journey to tackle marine litter that had begun with the adoption of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities in 1995. In 2017, the United Nations Environment Assembly had agreed to support the long-term elimination of the discharge of litter and microplastics into the oceans. She was optimistic that it was possible to address the challenges, but doing so required action, decision-making, assigning a value to the things humans threw away, and relying on science to point humankind in the right direction. By working together, participants at the meeting would demonstrate the power of international cooperation, building on the work they had done the previous years and driving policies to reduce plastic litter in the marine environment.
5. Ms. Tsering, in her remarks, acknowledged that the region was one of the largest producers of plastic litter, which made it particularly significant that the meeting was being held in Bangkok. The SEA of Solutions multi-stakeholder meeting held the previous week at the same venue by UNEP and the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia, with a focus on the region, had underscored the importance of science and data as a foundation for sound decision-making, including a shift towards a circular economy. At a pledging session, various stakeholders had made commitments in areas such as producing packaging that was easier to recycle. Participants had also heard about the need to understand the position of disadvantaged groups in contributing to more sustainable solutions and to improve communication with stakeholders.

II. Opening of the meeting

6. The meeting was opened by Mr. Ulf Björnholm, Deputy Secretary for Governing Bodies, UNEP, acting as Secretary of the meeting, on Monday, 18 November 2019 at 10.15 a.m.

III. Organizational matters

A. Attendance

7. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following parties: Albania, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium, Belize, Bhutan, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Montenegro, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, New Zealand, Norway, Palau, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Tuvalu, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Viet Nam.

8. A representatives of the following specialized agency also attended: Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations.

9. The following intergovernmental, non-governmental, industry, academic and other bodies were also represented: Association Congolaise pour le Développement Agricole, Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, Center for International Environment Law, Centre International de Droit Comparé de l'Environnement, Earth Island Institute, Environmental Investigation Agency, European Union, GRID-Arendal, Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives, Greenpeace International, Haiti Cholera Research Funding Foundation Inc., International Association of Students in Agricultural and Related Sciences, International Council of Chemical Associations, International POPs Elimination Network, Ocean Conservancy, Pew Charitable Trusts, Rural Area Development Programme, Strength in Diversity Development Centre, United States Council for International Business, Women's Environment and Development Organization, World Plastics Council and World Wide Fund for Nature.

B. Election of officers

10. At the opening session of the meeting, in accordance with paragraph 3 of rule 63 and paragraph 2 of rule 18 of the rules of procedure of the United Nations Environment Assembly, the following officers were elected, by acclamation, to the Bureau of the Third Meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-Ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics:

Chair:	Ms. Jillian Dempster (New Zealand) (Western Europe and other States)
Vice Chairs:	Mr. Satoru Iino (Japan) (Asian and Pacific States)
	Ms. Rose Makena Muchiri (Kenya) (African States)
	Mr. Ruslan Butovsky (Russian Federation) (Eastern European States)
Rapporteur:	Ms. Karen Watson (Guyana) (Latin American and Caribbean States)

Ms. Muchiri was represented at the meeting by Ms. Maxine Khakasa (Kenya).

11. The Bureau members were to serve in that capacity for any subsequent meetings of the expert group, and until the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly.

C. Adoption of the agenda

12. The following agenda was adopted on the basis of the provisional agenda contained in document UNEP/AHEG/2019/3/1/Rev.1.

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Organizational matters:
 - (a) Election of officers;
 - (b) Adoption of the agenda;

- (c) Organization of work.
- 3. Update on previous work of the ad hoc open-ended expert group.
- 4. General statements.
- 5. Mapping of all United Nations agencies, programmes, initiatives and expertise with relevance for the issue of marine litter, including plastic litter and microplastics.
- 6. Introduction to activities pursuant to resolution 4/6 of the United Nations Environment Assembly on marine plastic litter and microplastics:
 - (a) Stocktaking;
 - (b) Technical and financial resources or mechanisms;
 - (c) Methodology for assessment of effectiveness;
 - (d) Scientific advisory committee.
- 7. Other matters.
- 8. Identifying options in preparation for the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly.
- 9. Closure of the meeting.

D. Organization of work

- 13. The Chair drew participants' attention to the Code of Conduct to Prevent Harassment, Including Sexual Harassment, at United Nations System Events, which all registered delegates had received, and invited them to behave with integrity and respect towards all those involved in the meeting.
- 14. Recalling the extension of the mandate of the expert group in Environment Assembly resolution 4/6, she drew attention to the proposed programme of work contained in document UNEP/AHEG/2019/3/INF/1/Rev.1.
- 15. The Chair said that the meeting might wish to establish informal breakout groups to discuss agenda sub-items 6 (a)–(c), to provide an opportunity for more participatory and interactive dialogue in addition to that in plenary. Such breakout groups would be informal and their discussions would be summarized in plenary meetings. Consideration in plenary session of topics from the breakout groups would be reflected in the official report of the meeting.
- 16. After a discussion of the matter, there was convergence around the view that informal breakout groups would be established to discuss agenda sub-items 6 (a)–(c). The groups would be co-facilitated by a Bureau member or a representative of a regional group and a representative from among the major groups and stakeholders. Groups 1 and 2, each with two co-facilitators, would discuss the topics of stocktaking and the methodology for assessment of effectiveness (under sub-paragraphs 7 (a) and (d) of resolution 4/6 of the United Nations Environment Assembly), while groups 3 and 4, also with two co-facilitators each, would discuss the topic of technical and financial resources and mechanisms (under subparagraph 7 (b) of that resolution). The pairs of co-facilitators for groups 1 and 2 would be Mr. Ruslan Butovsky (Russian Federation) and Ms. Leida Rijnhout (Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future) (group 1) and Mr. Ayub Macharia (Kenya) and Mr. Ralph Schneider (World Plastics Council) (group 2), while the co-facilitators for groups 3 and 4 would be Mr. Terney Pradeep Kumara (Sri Lanka) and Mr. Griffins Ochieng (Centre for Environmental Justice and Development) (group 3) and Mr. Nathan Glassey (New Zealand) and Mr. Philip Jacob (Institute for Sustainable Development and Research) (group 4).
- 17. One representative expressed concern regarding the approach of co-facilitation of the informal breakout groups by representatives of major groups and stakeholders. The Chair said that the co-facilitators of the informal breakout groups would orally summarize the discussions held in those groups.

IV. Update on previous work of the ad hoc open-ended expert group

- 18. The Chair and a representative of the secretariat provided updates on the work undertaken by the expert group at and since its first two meetings, held in May and December 2018. The Chair drew attention to the decision by the Environment Assembly, in its resolution 4/6, to extend the mandate of the expert group until the fifth session of the Assembly while building on previous work.

19. Work had continued on the barriers to and options for combating marine plastic litter and microplastics from all sources with a view to developing a comprehensive approach, and on providing options for continued work, informed by the summary for policymakers contained in document UNEP/AHEG/2018/1/INF/3 and a summary of discussion papers on governance options contained in document UNEP/AHEG/2018/2/2.

20. During the previous meetings, many experts had noted that an effective response would require a new legally binding agreement. Marine litter and microplastics had to be eliminated from land- and sea-based sources, avoiding leakage and through a holistic, evidence-based, full-life-cycle approach, with the aim of moving to resource-efficient and circular management of plastic. Prevention was paramount and was the priority. It was also critical to address legacy marine litter and microplastics in the environment.

21. Regarding the continued work of the group, there was a need to strengthen the science-policy interface at the international level and to do more to support evidence-based approaches, improve understanding of the impact of plastic litter on the marine environment and promote its elimination at all levels. Several options had been proposed, including establishing a global knowledge hub that might develop harmonized monitoring methodologies; collecting, collating and openly sharing data, robust science and sound scientific practices from all actors and sources; developing guidelines for the sampling and analysis of marine macro- and microplastics; identifying demonstration projects and linkages with regional activities; and mapping actors, initiatives and approaches. The knowledge hub could initiate activities; serve as a clearinghouse to support all stakeholders in addressing aspects of marine litter prevention and environmentally sound and risk-based recovery; consider the establishment of a scientific and technical advisory group, building on existing mechanisms; consider an interagency examination of the health and environmental aspects of the plastic issue with a source-to-sea approach; perform a cost-benefit analysis of job transition schemes; consider preparing a compendium of industry initiatives to enhance transparency; and provide examples of existing national-level actions, such as extended producer responsibility.

22. Regarding enhanced coordination and governance, it had been highlighted that information and research were critical enablers and that the overall approach should be comprehensive, holistic, transparent and evidence-based, prioritizing elimination and prevention. Key areas to consider included the science-policy interface; international cooperation; multi-stakeholder engagement; and the realities of differences in contexts and capacities. Options for enhanced coordination and governance included strengthening global coordination by broadening the scope of existing partnerships and mechanisms, possibly through a new coordinating structure that would build on existing initiatives; improving regional coordination, notably with international instruments; encouraging new and enhancing existing forms of financing and technical support, and addressing capacity-building needs and opportunities, in particular for developing countries, small island developing States and local communities; assisting governments and other entities in accessing available resources; considering an international legally binding agreement on marine litter and microplastics; and considering the establishment of a global forum to enable governments, industry, academia, civil society and other stakeholders to share experiences and coordinate action.

23. Turning to related work being done by UNEP, the representative of the secretariat said that a global review of national laws and regulations had been launched at the second meeting of the expert group. Guidelines were being developed for policy options to address issues such as single-use plastics, and a web-based policy toolkit relating to single-use plastics and other policy tools related to marine litter and microplastics prevention was being created. UNEP was working with GEO Blue Planet and other groups to improve monitoring and the availability of data and had conducted a number of capacity-building activities, including leadership- and expert-track massive open online courses, events to train trainers on monitoring and assessment, and workshops on strengthening institutional capacity to address the illegal trade in plastic waste.

24. In the ensuing discussion, several representatives said that the link to the work done during the expert group's previous meetings should be reinforced, including by making previous relevant documents available to the meeting. The Chair said that the secretariat would follow up on that request.

V. General statements

25. Under the agenda item, representatives of regional groups, Member States, major groups, stakeholders and partnerships delivered general statements.

26. Many representatives took the opportunity to congratulate the Chair on her election and to express their gratitude to the Member States that had provided funding to enable the meeting to be held. Several representatives also thanked the Government of Thailand for hosting the meeting and the secretariat for the logistical arrangements, including the preparation of the working documents.

27. Noting that the issue of marine litter and microplastics had been on the international environmental agenda since the first United Nations Environment Assembly, held in Nairobi in 2014, many representatives recalled that the urgent need for concrete action to tackle the problem of marine litter had been stressed in all the Assembly's subsequent resolutions on the matter, which had led to the establishment of the expert group in 2017. Many drew attention to the alarming rate of increase of the amount of marine plastic litter and microplastics in the world's oceans.

28. There was convergence around the view that the problem of marine litter and microplastics posed a threat to all countries, including landlocked ones, as it had serious economic, ecological and social consequences that risked derailing progress towards sustainable development. It was noted that it had been scientifically established that marine litter and microplastics constituted a serious challenge to the sustainability of the marine environment and therefore also to humans, who were directly or indirectly affected through food chains and other means. Many representatives drew attention to the global nature of the problem. Plastics and microplastics were being found even in the most remote areas, such as the Arctic, and in all types of marine species. Given the global nature of the issue, many representatives reiterated the importance of international cooperation to devise concrete solutions. Many participants said that without a global approach, progress would be limited. It was widely acknowledged that, while there might not be a one-size-fits-all solution, given the diversity of national circumstances, concerted action should be taken in accordance with national policies, approaches and circumstances. Some participants suggested that global solutions as well as regional, national and local ones were therefore needed, and that they should involve local actors, who often had the specific expertise required to address particular facets of the problem.

29. A number of representatives suggested that, since almost all marine litter and microplastics originated from land-based sources, adopting sustainable consumption and production of plastics, embedding the life-cycle approach and a reduce-reuse-recycle mindset into all aspects of the economy, and taking an integrated, holistic approach to waste management could significantly contribute to the prevention of marine litter and microplastics. One representative said that all countries should introduce national laws that banned or discouraged the production and consumption of specific types of plastic and should ensure that such laws were strictly enforced. In that context, many representatives provided details of the national legislation and policies their countries had put in place to manage waste in general, and to reduce marine litter and microplastics in particular.

30. Several representatives said that their Governments had taken measures to raise public awareness of the negative environmental consequences of using single-use plastics. Many participants emphasized the importance of such awareness-raising. Some States had banned single-use plastics or imposed restrictive levies on their production and consumption. Others were considering a total ban on their manufacture and import. In one, single-use plastics had been banned in conservation areas. In many, there was a focus on reducing the use of single-use plastic products and on reusing and recycling them. One measure taken in many States was to ban plastic bags. In some countries, a comprehensive approach had been taken, banning the production, import and use of such bags, while others had adopted laws banning both plastic bags and plastic bottles. Nonetheless, such laws were often difficult to enforce owing, among other things, to the fact that contraband plastic bags and bottles were often illegally imported from neighbouring States with no such ban; thus, some representatives stressed the need for coordinated action. Many representatives said that they would welcome the opportunity to discuss alternatives, including life-cycle-based considerations as well as those related to costs. One representative proposed the use of tax and other incentives to encourage businesses currently producing or importing plastic products to implement alternative solutions.

31. A number of representatives said that producers of potentially polluting products had a duty to appropriately manage the entire life cycle of those products. Some representatives said that the "polluter pays" principle should be applied to plastic industries. Several reported that their Governments were working with the local business community to achieve forward-looking, ambitious, achievable goals and innovative solutions. Public-private partnerships were being used to, for example, encourage the development of new technologies; to recover value from plastics and improve product design; and to increase recyclability. One representative said that the strong business lobby in his country continued to send contradictory messages to the public and that his Government was having to work to counter that. Another highlighted the proliferation of private-sector commitments as a positive development.

32. Despite the significant progress in many countries, several representatives said that caution should be exercised when calling for fundamental changes to industry. If millions of jobs were lost as a result, social unrest and increased youth unemployment would ensue. One representative, however, said that such changes could also lead to the creation of “greener” and more decent jobs, especially for women and young people.

33. Many representatives stressed the importance of preventing marine litter by addressing the whole life cycle of plastics and discussing potential cross-sectoral solutions. One representative cited as essential elements the transition to sustainable consumption and production patterns, the sustainable management of chemicals and waste, efficient waste water treatment, addressing the sea-based sources of litter, including microplastics, and monitoring and cleaning up marine plastic litter. Another emphasized the need to adopt a life-cycle approach in which States took responsibility for the effects of their decisions, recognizing their economic, environmental and social costs. A third recalled that at previous meetings of the expert group, participants had stressed the need for a holistic approach that encompassed the entire life cycle of plastics and all land- and sea-based means through which they ended up constituting marine litter. Many highlighted the need for changing the paradigm of consumption and production.

34. Some representatives said that there was a need to build on successful regional and global mechanisms, such as the marine litter action plans under the regional seas conventions, the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management and its beyond-2020 process, and the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities. Some said that legal and technical gaps in the existing mechanisms should be addressed through a multi-layered governance approach. Many welcomed recent progress at the international level, particularly with the amendment in April 2019 of the annexes to the Basel Convention to address the issue of transboundary movement of plastic waste, which was expected to result in better control of the export of unsorted and problematic plastic waste. Several representatives lauded the adoption in October 2018 by the International Maritime Organization of an action plan to address marine plastic litter from ships. The Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance was identified as a potentially useful source of information about new initiatives, success stories and best practices, given the diversity of Commonwealth countries in terms of region, topography, size and level of development.

35. Some representatives drew attention to the measures being taken under the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean; the Osaka Blue Ocean Vision, which aimed to reduce additional pollution by marine plastic litter to zero by 2050; the Implementation Framework for Actions on Marine Plastic Litter formulated by the environment ministers of the Group of 20; the Global Plastic Action Partnership; and the decision adopted some days previously at the seventeenth meeting of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment on the problem of plastic pollution. Representatives of a number of entities provided updates on relevant initiatives taken by their organizations and under their mandates. Many representatives deemed it commendable that the impacts of plastic pollution on aquatic species had been raised as an emerging issue in the context of various frameworks related to biodiversity and nature conservation, such as the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals. Several representatives suggested using that momentum to address the remaining gaps at the global level.

36. Referring to the requests for mapping and analysis that had been made at the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, some representatives said that it was important for the expert group to develop and discuss those topics with context and purpose, treating them as building blocks for a stronger international response to the problem of marine litter and microplastics. With regard to stocktaking, for example, there was a need to regularly take stock of progress, which would require a sustainable stocktaking mechanism. The assessment of the effectiveness of possible response options should enable measurement of whether progress was being made towards the global goals that had been set, primarily target 14.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals and ultimately the elimination of all discharge of plastic litter into the ocean. Several representatives said that in order to achieve such measurement, more data and research were needed to provide a strong scientific and knowledge base. In addition, robust financial and technical arrangements that could support national efforts were needed, as many States, particularly developing ones, currently lacked the capacity and technical ability to enforce the laws and policies they had adopted to reduce marine litter.

37. Several representatives said that there should be more focus than at the expert group's previous two meetings on delivering on the group's core mandate, possibly preparing the ground for a substantial and ambitious resolution. The group needed to take into account progress to date and the action it should take in order to be able to provide options regarding global solutions to the problem of marine litter and microplastics. It was observed that it was important for the expert group to have a clear vision of how its work would relate to that platform while avoiding fragmentation and duplication of work. If the expert group did not manage to deliver concrete and effective options for solutions aimed at the long-term elimination of plastic pollution from land- and sea-based sources in a timely fashion, there was a risk of delivering yet another resolution stressing the need for urgent action along with more analysis and data, and establishing yet another coordination mechanism, giving a false sense of achievement.

38. Many representatives called for the expert group to discuss in detail all the relevant options, including that of a global agreement that would address the whole life cycle of plastics. There were expressions of support for an international legally binding instrument that regulated the production, trade in and use of plastic and microplastics and the management of their waste. Several representatives nevertheless urged the expert group not to prejudge whether such an agreement would be binding or voluntary. The view was expressed that, as the existing legal framework covering marine plastic pollution was fragmented and ineffective to the extent that it was not coordinated, a more coherent and targeted global response was needed. Some said that the Environment Assembly should provide a mandate to develop such an instrument. Some representatives said that discussion on such an instrument had been useful to date and should be continued and called for such an instrument to take into consideration national circumstances and support local governance, as well as acknowledging local and regional challenges. Some others, however, noted that the expert group had a very specific mandate under resolution 4/6 – to analyse the effectiveness of existing and potential response options and activities with regard to marine litter and microplastics at all levels to determine the contribution that they made to solving the global problem – and urged the expert group to adhere to that mandate.

VI. Mapping of all United Nations agencies, programmes, initiatives and expertise with relevance for the issue of marine litter, including plastic litter and microplastics

39. The Chair introduced the agenda item, recalling that in paragraph 8 of United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 4/6 the Environment Management Group had been invited to engage in and contribute to the work of the expert group by providing, inter alia, mapping of all United Nations agencies, programmes, initiatives and other sources of expertise relating to marine litter, including plastic litter and microplastics.

40. On behalf of the Environment Management Group, a representative of the secretariat introduced document UNEP/AHEG/2019/3/INF/5, which outlined the objectives, scope, activities and membership of the interagency task team that had been established by the senior officials of the Group to conduct the requested mapping.

41. In the ensuing discussion, several representatives welcomed the creation of the task team, along with its objectives and scope. One proposed adding to the three activities mentioned in the document – the mapping exercise itself, the provision of inputs, case studies and recommendations to the ad hoc expert group, and the enabling of information and knowledge exchange among members of the Environment Management Group – a fourth activity, the avoidance of duplication.

42. Several representatives spoke of the methodology to be used for the mapping exercise. One questioned whether stocktaking and mapping should use the same methodology, as the two tasks were different. Another expressed concern about duplication and proposed that the mapping exercise feed into the stocktaking exercise. A third said that as many countries as possible should be consulted to ensure comprehensive mapping of work at the national, regional and international levels.

43. Several representatives expressed concern at the prospect of having the final outcome of the exercise available only in time for the fifth meeting of the expert group. They proposed that a preliminary report be submitted for the fourth meeting. Another representative, however, pointed out that the mapping exercise aimed to respond to the invitation to the Environment Management Group contained in paragraph 8 of resolution 4/6, which did not fall within the mandate of the expert group. Rather than directing the Environment Management Group to produce an interim report, the expert Group should consider the most appropriate time to hold its next meeting in relation to the submission of the final output of the mapping. The representative of the secretariat said that it was planning to

provide an interim report on the stocktaking exercise and that it thus made sense to also provide an interim mapping report. She would convey the request to the Environment Management Group.

44. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that he was concerned that the mapping exercise had in fact led to the creation of an additional platform and thus the potential for duplication. The representative of the secretariat explained that task teams were the standard internal mechanism through which the Environment Management Group conducted its work and that the newly created task team need not continue beyond completion of the mapping exercise. One representative highlighted the potential for using the work under way across the six programmes of the UNEP 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns to inform the work of the task team.

45. Another representative, praising the contribution of the Environment Management Group to work on biodiversity and sustainable development, said that it was her understanding that, on the basis of the discussions at and the recommendations of the second meeting of the expert group, interaction between the two bodies should go beyond the mapping exercise. The Environment Management Group had also been invited to engage in the discussions of the expert group, and the shared view had been that the mapping exercise should feed into the larger endeavour to improve environmental governance and increase coordination of United Nations activities related to marine litter at the country level.

VII. Introduction to activities pursuant to resolution 4/6 of the United Nations Environment Assembly on marine plastic litter and microplastics

A. Stocktaking

46. The Chair, introducing the agenda item, drew attention to the expert group's mandate with regard to stocktaking as set out in paragraph 7 (a) of resolution 4/6.

47. A representative of the secretariat introduced document UNEP/AHEG/2019/3/2. An external expert then described the work being done in conjunction with regional partners from around the world. To support the stocktaking exercise, it was proposed to conduct a survey complemented by interviews and a literature review. A progress report would be provided to the fourth meeting of the expert group and a final report to the fifth meeting.

48. Another external expert then presented the online inventory platform and the stocktaking dashboard, which would allow users to analyse the results of the survey.

49. In the ensuing discussion, several participants, while welcoming the proposal, including aspects such as the life-cycle approach to stocktaking and the consideration of the full range of interventions from local to international levels, said that they also had concerns. One participant asked who could access the interface, how the data would be protected from hackers, how users could check the veracity of the information, whether there was a harmonized methodology, and what units would be used for calculations. The first external expert said that her institution provided high-security data storage. She added that the project had been submitted to her institution for ethics approval and that it complied with European Union Regulation 2016/679 on general data protection.

50. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, noted that the dashboard showed a list of actions and asked how it was possible to identify any existing gaps, especially from a global perspective. She said that it would be helpful to have an overview of activities under the Basel Convention and to have such updates from parallel forums provided at future meetings of the expert group. A number of representatives asked for clarification of the link between the stocktaking and the effectiveness assessment to avoid overlap between the two exercises.

51. Two representatives asked how the mapping of activities and the assessment of effectiveness could become more permanent, rather than being a one-off exercise. Several wondered how it would take global initiatives into account, with one noting that the presentation lacked analysis that would enable Governments to determine whether global targets were being met.

52. One representative said that the question of how to steer actions towards achieving shared objectives was being overlooked. She suggested that global action could catalyse national and local actions, create synergies and avoid duplication. Furthermore, in addition to local and national initiatives, it was also important to take into account international initiatives such as the Basel Convention and relevant regional agreements so that gaps could be identified. A representative of the secretariat noted that the resolution had mentioned capturing actions and activities at all levels,

including internationally, and that the proposal presented earlier during the meeting on mapping all United Nations agencies, programmes, initiatives and expertise with relevance for the issue would use the same platform.

53. Several representatives asked who would use the data, who would upload national data, how all stakeholders would be contacted, and who would validate the quality of the data. One of them warned that, without quality control, beach cleaning might be given the same value as a regulatory framework on plastics, and that the initiative needed to offer added value, not just an additional reporting burden. He warned of the risk of dissemination of greenwash by the private sector and of unbalanced reporting owing to the short time frame, with a few countries reporting many initiatives and some reporting none at all. Another representative asked whether countries that might have difficulty inputting the data would be offered support so that their data could be duly recorded, and why international institutions would not be consulted until the second phase, even though collecting data from them would be easier and faster. The external expert said that the phasing was a proposal. Guidance could be provided for those not reporting under multilateral environmental agreements, and a team would check the consistency of responses. Lack of response by States would trigger follow-up and a team would be responsible for scrutinizing the consistency of the responses.

54. One representative offered to provide information that his Government had collected as part of its presidency of an international forum, thus reducing duplication of work. Another said that her Government wished to ensure that the initiative was in line with the mandate given by the United Nations Environment Assembly. She was concerned about the complexity of the exercise. Also, while welcoming the review of responses by experts, she would like to know what criteria the reviewers would use and how they would guard against bias. A discussion of the timeline for the exercise and for stocktaking was also needed. The representative of the secretariat said that interviews could be incorporated into the exercise. As for the timeline, the secretariat would expect guidance from meeting participants on the matter.

Discussions held in the informal breakout groups on stocktaking and on the methodology for assessment of effectiveness

55. Informal breakout groups 1 and 2 had each discussed agenda sub-items 6 (a) (stocktaking) and 6 (c) (methodology for assessment of effectiveness).

56. The Chair reminded participants that, while the discussions of the breakout groups' work were very important, the groups were informal in nature and had been convened to enable the plenary to discuss the sub-items as effectively as possible.

57. Mr. Butovsky, co-facilitator, provided a short update from groups 1 and 2, which had discussed the main purpose of the stocktaking exercise. It could address the mapping exercise but also serve as a baseline for future effectiveness evaluations. The exercise could enable overlaps and gaps to be pinpointed and identify linkages and interrelationships, including between relevant conventions, to help avoid duplication and fragmentation while creating opportunities for cooperation. Links between the stocktaking exercise and the multi-stakeholder platform could be explored. The scope of the exercise should be global, with inputs from the regional and national levels, and should include agreements and conventions at all levels. The full life cycle needed to be encompassed, including upstream, downstream and sea-based sources of marine plastic litter and microplastics. The structure for the stocktaking would depend on the availability of robust qualitative and quantitative data. Some of the data required related to human and environmental health; biodiversity and the food chain; livelihoods and jobs; safe production and supply chain transparency; the life cycle and viability of alternatives to plastics; the variability of impacts across types of ecosystems and geographical regions; resource and materials efficiency; and taking into consideration production, consumption and waste management. Negative externalities and the cost of inaction should also be considered.

58. Participants in the two breakout groups had felt that some of the categories required further refinement and could perhaps be broken down while maintaining flexibility between them. The normative category could capture on-the-ground activities and could reflect legislative and policy measures at the local, national, regional and global levels. Infrastructure should be added as a category. Some representatives had said that the categories "normative" and "evidential" created confusion and had suggested the use of plain language. "Implementation" could be used instead of "evidential", and "human and institutional" should be added to "capacity-building". The secretariat should provide clarification regarding the timeline for completion of the stocktaking and effectiveness evaluation. Given their relationship and in order to facilitate their coordination, the categories for the two exercises should be the same. Some participants had said that the exercises should extend through time, while others had pointed out that extending the exercises, although it could prove useful, was beyond the mandate of the group. It had been said that, in measuring effectiveness, country-specific

conditions should be considered. The exercise could provide a baseline to evaluate what could be achieved with existing measures. Finally, it had been noted that it was important to define effectiveness, and that comprehensiveness across the life cycle might not equate to effectiveness. It was also important to measure transboundary effectiveness and, in that regard, the transboundary movement of waste should be added to the focus areas.

59. Ms. Rijnhout, co-facilitator of group 1, said that, at the group's second meeting, participants had expressed a desire for intersessional engagement regarding the process for stocktaking and the methodology for assessing effectiveness. The secretariat should clarify the timeline for the exercise and the methodology by which Member States would participate intersessionally. An opportunity should be given to update submissions of response options discussed at the second meeting of the expert group in time for the fourth meeting. A desire for swift progress had been expressed, and a methodology for assessing effectiveness should be presented at the fourth meeting of the expert group. Some participants had stressed their interest in a discussion of options for a continuous stocktaking exercise for consideration at the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly. The multi-stakeholder platform could be leveraged for that purpose and to maintain a marine litter database, and work to establish that platform should be speeded up. The utility of building on existing reports and on work conducted in other bodies, including by UNEP, regional seas conventions, the World Bank, the World Resources Institute, the Global Environment Outlook process and the G-20 stocktaking exercise, had been underscored. Regional stocktaking should be done to identify regional barriers and issues and regional frameworks and initiatives.

60. Items suggested by various participants for consideration for the agenda of the expert group's fourth meeting had included stocktaking outcomes; the methodology for the effectiveness assessment; a discussion of potential response options, either separately or in conjunction with stocktaking; an update on the multi-stakeholder platform; and an update on the response options discussed at the second meeting.

61. Mr. Rommens, co-facilitator of group 2, summarizing that group's discussions at its second meeting, said that participants in that group had, given the complexity and urgency of the stocktaking and effectiveness exercises, underscored the need for a robust timeline for their completion. The secretariat should maintain continuous two-way dialogue with Member States – for example, by distributing draft survey questions for comment and enabling updates to Member State submissions, including on methodology, after the current meeting. The role of the Bureau had been seen as essential by some participants. It had been stressed that the indicators required substantial work and should be discussed during the intersessional period. Although potential response options would be based on the stocktaking exercise, there was already enough material available to begin crafting them. Work on disclosure of data should be done in close collaboration with Governments. Items suggested for inclusion on the agenda of the next meeting of the expert group had included the stocktaking itself; a summary of responses to the initial analysis, which might reveal information gaps; progress made by the scientific advisory committee; progress made on the multi-stakeholder platform; and potential response options. The role of the scientific advisory committee in supporting the exercise had been considered crucial, and monitoring was one of its key tasks. Several participants had said that it was important to avoid repetition by taking into account related reports.

62. When participants had heard in plenary from the breakout groups, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that at the 2019 Arab League Summit it had been decided that environment ministries would draw up a joint strategy for waste management. Waste had also been discussed by the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment in Cairo in October 2018. Those activities showed how important the topic was to the region. The UNEP secretariat needed to back regional organizations, as they played a vital role in ensuring that the global agenda was implemented. The countries she represented would like the expert group to provide assistance to regional organizations so that they could tackle the question appropriately.

63. Discussing stocktaking and the effectiveness of response options, one representative said that the efficiency of options could not be considered without the scientific and monitoring work or the technical and finance work. Linkages among those three aspects needed to be made in assessing overall effectiveness at the global level.

64. Several representatives said that it was important for stocktaking to be an ongoing exercise, with one noting the global target that had to be delivered by 2025, in accordance with resolution 3/7 and target 14.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals. Two representatives said that the purpose of the stocktaking was to get an overall picture of what response options were available for consideration and to make clear what stocktaking meant, rather than to find out what each country was doing.

65. One representative called for a draft of the stocktaking report to be made ready for the next meeting of the expert group, a revised methodology for evaluating effectiveness to be drawn up, linkages between stocktaking and methodology to be taken into account, and the possibility of using webinars to provide information during the intersessional period to be considered.
66. One representative said that the findings and conclusions of reports had to be made available in time to enable substantive discussions at the expert group's next meeting. Another said that the group needed to make progress on thematic discussions. She proposed that stocktaking and effectiveness evaluations be placed on the next meeting's agenda.
67. Regarding the two work streams, one representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that the group of countries she represented wished to see the stocktaking exercise simplified and to see that work continue after the meeting, with a clear focus on the entire life cycle of plastics at the global level. As another representative had said, it was important to acknowledge the limitations on what could be delivered, but enough information had already been gathered since the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly for progress to be made. The expert group had moved from discussing options for global solutions at its previous meeting back to discussing stocktaking at the current one, so it should be possible to move forward with discussions on options. Better links between the expert group's previous and current work should already have been established. Those links could be improved and form a starting point for discussion at the fourth meeting.
68. One representative said that in his country, while each authority had decision-making powers, they did not act because no law obliged them to do so. He added that attitude was an important aspect to consider. In his country, thanks to laws introduced by local authorities, citizens were returning to practices used 30 years earlier, such as using leaves for packaging instead of plastic.
69. Regarding the sequencing of information, the Chair said that one suggestion had been to address stocktaking at the expert group's fourth meeting and effectiveness at the fifth meeting. Another had been to address both topics at both meetings. It was important to consider whether there was enough time to gather the information and perform sound analysis. It would be useful to have greater precision regarding the tasks and ideas proposed to the secretariat. Perhaps guidance could be provided to the secretariat before the next meeting through a steering group that could respond to a revised proposal during the intersessional period, or perhaps through an online forum. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, said that perhaps the Bureau could support the work. Several representatives said that it would be better to first see how much progress could be made at the third meeting. One of them said that a smaller group might not be representative of the entire group. He and another representative added that another possibility might be for countries to provide written submissions. One representative said that more clarity about the intersessional work was needed, as his country might not have the capacity to perform it.
70. One representative emphasized that the expert group's mandate was to identify options and make proposals for the fifth session of the Environment Assembly. Since the Assembly gave overarching guidance at the global level, the agenda for the expert group's next meeting should raise the discussion to the global level.
71. Two representatives expressed concern about focusing only on global response options, saying that national actions, such as developing domestic infrastructure, might add up to the best global response. Others said that action was needed at all levels and that there was already enough knowledge for a response. One of them said that a global response could trigger national action, make countries reflect and identify common goals and priorities. Although the secretariat's work on existing measures was useful, it was not necessary to wait for the report emanating from the stocktaking and effectiveness exercise, as relevant knowledge already existed. She suggested re-examining the global response options proposed during the expert group's second meeting and discussing what a global response might entail. Parties had had an opportunity since then to submit responses, which the secretariat could use to create a discussion document that would form the basis for input to the Environment Assembly.
72. One representative, expressing support for the inventory exercise, said that it was important to consider specific situations in certain countries.
73. Responding to a request to the secretariat to report on the multi-stakeholder platform, so that the expert group could consider its relationship with other activities, such as stocktaking, a representative of the secretariat said that, while the World Environment Situation Room covered a broad range of topics, it used thematic entry points allowing the user to access the platform to visualize and download data. The secretariat needed guidance from the expert group on how to

develop the linkages to various other platforms and tools and was examining how to ensure interoperability and make information available through the one-stop shop. The platform should be on the agenda for the expert group's next meeting.

B. Technical and financial resources and mechanisms

74. The Chair, introducing the item, recalled that, pursuant to paragraph 7 (b) of United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 4/6, the expert group was mandated to identify technical and financial resources or mechanisms for supporting countries in addressing marine plastic litter and microplastics.

1. Financial resources and mechanisms

75. A representative of the secretariat, introducing document UNEP/AHEG/2019/3/3, said that, in response to resolution 4/6, three studies had been commissioned on the topic of financial resources and mechanisms. The first aimed to explore opportunities and challenges at the national level, using Kenya as a case study. The first objective of the study had been to understand land- and ocean-based sources and pathways of marine debris in order to support the development of regulatory and market-based instruments to combat marine pollution. The second objective had been to highlight costs, lost revenues and opportunities through the use of innovative financing schemes and instruments as part of a circular economy approach. The study had focused on coastal Kenya, gathering first-hand data through surveys and questionnaires and secondary data through desk studies on sectoral and government inputs, and using modelling to estimate costs and opportunities. The study offered a number of conclusions and recommendations and highlighted opportunities relating to innovative financing.

76. The second study, which was presented by an external expert, had been conducted with a view to creating an online inventory of financial resources for addressing marine plastic litter and microplastics that could be used to estimate public and private flows of funding; to establish a database of funders by country; to identify trends, including through the use of artificial intelligence and keyword analysis, and pinpoint gaps in the market; to create a benchmark for further progress; and to initiate a process to harmonize reporting. The study had concluded that an estimated \$1.3 billion in funding had been issued for marine litter prevention and clean-up in 2018, although that was likely an underestimation. The majority of that amount, 62 per cent, had come from public sources, and it was necessary to examine how to increase the percentage of funding coming from private sources.

77. The third study, which aimed to explore the engagement of non-traditional stakeholders in addressing plastic pollution, was under way and would be presented at the fourth meeting of the expert group.

78. In the ensuing discussion on financial resources and mechanisms, representatives identified a number of issues that needed further clarification or discussion. Those included definition of the terms "public" and "private" as applied to funding; how the information and tools provided could be used effectively by decision-makers; what activities the \$1.3 billion issued in 2018 had been allocated to and the form – such as grants, direct investment or loans – that the funding had taken; the exact types of institutions that had been, and should be, looked at for the creation of the online inventory; the need to increase funding from private sources, including by placing greater emphasis on the "polluter pays" and "extended producer responsibility" principles; the importance of considering opportunities for funding solid-waste management; the rigour and thoroughness of the keyword-search exercise; and the need to carefully manage the relationship between the online inventory and the financial elements of the stocktaking exercise.

79. Representatives also expressed a number of concerns, including with regard to the accuracy and therefore the usability of the information on funding by country, and to the fact that a case study on a single country might not yield enough conclusions to fulfil the mandate of identifying resources and mechanisms that could support all countries.

80. One representative proposed that more information be gathered about other potentially applicable financial initiatives and that the topic be placed on the agenda of the expert group's fourth meeting.

81. The external expert, welcoming the various comments and proposals, said that he looked forward to working with the group to take account of their views. Responding to a number of questions, he explained the calculations in more detail. He also pointed out that the exercise had focused on recipient rather than donor countries in calculating the spending per region; and that the online database, once up and running, would offer a wealth of information for use by countries in accessing financing.

2. Technical resources and mechanisms

82. A representative of the secretariat introduced document UNEP/AHEG/2019/3/4 on a draft approach for technology and innovation mapping, after which an external expert gave a presentation on the topic. He said that the goal of the project was to identify and disseminate technical resources and technological innovations relevant for the prevention and reduction of marine litter, with a main focus on macro plastics, and using land-based and water-based technologies, with a focus on low and medium costs. Information on the status of and potential barriers to implementation of the identified technological innovations would also be collected. The outputs of the mapping would include a database of technological innovations, a report on the findings, and guidelines and recommendations relating to the best points of intervention to prevent and reduce marine litter.

83. In the ensuing discussion, representatives identified a number of issues needing further clarification or discussion. One representative said that she had expected the issues of technical and financial resources and mechanisms to be considered in parallel and the focus to be on the global-level actors that could support countries in technical matters, rather than on the availability of technologies. Another pointed out that the mandate given to the expert group in resolution 4/6 referred to technical resources or mechanisms and not to technology and innovation. A third said that the word “technology” should be defined as also including mechanisms and systems that could be usefully employed to prevent and reduce marine litter. Two representatives highlighted the importance not only of the technologies themselves but also of capacity-building and knowledge transfer.

84. One representative recalled that, at all four meetings of the United Nations Environment Assembly, Member States had been urged to prioritize cost-effectiveness and best available technologies, and another said that expensive technologies would be beyond his country’s means. Several others, however, considered it premature to limit the study to low- and medium-cost technologies. As more expensive technologies entered the mainstream, their costs might go down. One representative said that the establishment and use of regional hubs for the treatment of waste might enable developing countries to access some of the higher-cost technologies. Another stressed the need for countries to make their own decisions with regard to technologies, adding that the proposed report should not contain recommendations.

85. Representatives then highlighted some issues to take into account when considering the relative value or importance of technical resources. Those included the volume of waste that a technology could treat; the implications of the technology for human health and for jobs; and the importance of ensuring waste prevention and not only waste management. One representative mentioned the need to take into account resources that supported sustainable consumption and production. Another wondered why landfill management technologies and innovations were promoted in the mapping. A third said that, in addition to waste management downstream, sustainable design and business models should be considered.

3. Discussions held in the informal breakout groups on technical and financial resources and mechanisms

86. Mr. Glassey, co-facilitator of group 4, said that participants had noted that the efforts to identify technical and financial resources or mechanisms for supporting countries in addressing marine plastic litter and microplastics should be limited to the mandate of the expert group, given the limited resources and time available to the secretariat. Identification of mechanisms in both the public and private sectors should be included for both financial and technical aspects. It was important to differentiate the technical from the technological. During the initial phase of the exercise, only technical actors and resources or mechanisms should be identified, with care to maintain an impartial process. It was suggested that technical gaps identified should be linked both with existing financial resources or funding mechanisms and with investment gaps.

87. Preventing pollution was as important as coping with it, and that entailed the need for a balanced accounting of upstream and downstream measures in keeping with a full-life-cycle approach. Upstream innovation, including in production and product design, should be catalogued. Several participants highlighted the usefulness of the “extended producer responsibility” and “polluter pays” principles.

88. A comprehensive list of funding categories could be created and would include such categories as multilateral development banks, bilateral assistance, and resources under multilateral environmental agreements. A database of funding mechanisms should also be created. Significant financial mechanisms already existed for waste management initiatives, and those must be included. Traditional sources of funding should be prioritized, but a step-wise approach was suggested to encompass other sources as the exercise progressed. Hand in hand with the catalogues created, it would be necessary to

create enabling conditions to facilitate access to the listed sources of funding. The secretariat was encouraged to share the results of the study as early as possible, and a draft map of funding sources should be made available in time for the fourth meeting of the expert group.

89. Mr. Kumara, co-facilitator of group 3, said that some of the feedback of group 3 had been similar to that of group 4. Participants had noted that enabling conditions for countries to access financing should take into consideration the specific conditions of each country. In addition to the funding categories mentioned by group 4, non-traditional sources such as the private sector and foundations should be included. The comprehensive catalogue of funding options could include information on the types of initiatives for which funding was available – for example, whether for upstream or downstream measures, and whether their focus was on the local, national or regional levels. In that regard, it was noted that “matchmaking” between funders and recipients could be mutually beneficial. To facilitate success, targeted capacity-building and technical support in recipient regions would be required.

90. Extended producer responsibility schemes could incentivize waste reduction at the source, and establish earmarked sources of funding for waste management that reduced the impacts of downstream waste. Improved methodology was needed at the global level to establish national baselines for marine litter that could guide countries in pinpointing national targets and priorities. It had been suggested that waste management be improved at both the local and regional levels.

91. Improved understanding of barriers to accessing funding would be required for effective implementation. High transaction costs were one such barrier; they and other barriers must be addressed. In that regard, specific attention should be given to providing information and support to assist Member States in completing funding applications.

92. A holistic, life-cycle-based approach to resource mobilization through support for indirect policy measures could bring broader positive results that would positively affect the plastic pollution problem. Financial and technical resources were related and should continue to be given joint consideration. Finally, relevant existing information, such as that included in work done for the G-20 meeting held in June 2019 and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation initiative, could be used as a building block to develop the catalogues of technical and financial resources and mechanisms. It was suggested that the issue of financing be included as an item on the agenda of the expert group’s next meeting.

93. A common database for funding could be created; initiatives under regional action plans included; and waste management improved at the local and regional levels.

94. Some participants had considered that the proposed focus of the study on technology solutions was not in accordance with the mandate of the expert group as outlined in Environment Assembly resolution 4/6. That focus should be changed to technical resources and mechanisms. A suggestion had been made to apply a holistic perspective to the methodology of the inventory by looking at preventive approaches rather than just end-of-pipe solutions in the context of applying a life-cycle approach.

95. Continuing to report on the discussions by participants in informal breakout group 4, Mr. Glassey said that, according to the participants, one option for setting the agenda for the fourth meeting of the expert group was to consolidate all of the aspects of subparagraph 7 of resolution 4/6. It had also been suggested that the agenda might focus on the global mandate from the third session of the Environment Assembly. Some participants had said that the group was not ready for such an ambitious agenda. Some participants had suggested that one consolidated report could be produced, which would identify technical resources and their related mechanisms as well as financial resources and mechanisms.

96. Regarding the timeline and the process, participants had underscored the importance of having comprehensive information to make well-informed decisions. At the same time, decisions should not be delayed, given the urgency of combating the plastic pollution problem, and bearing in mind the precautionary approach. It had been recognized that consultation with national experts at different levels might take time. A step-wise approach could be taken, with concrete and simple products developed first, in time for the fourth meeting of the expert group. One option was to first develop the database of traditional donors for the financial inventory. The shared view was that as much progress as possible should be made during the current meeting, as small countries would find it hard to allocate further resources for the exercise during the intersessional period.

97. Once the breakout groups had been heard from in the plenary meeting, general support was expressed for the development of a database of funding mechanisms. One representative reiterated the need to simplify the response that had been proposed in the meeting document. Proposals were made regarding the kinds of information to be collected and fed into such an inventory. They included

information, both nominal and geographical, about the funders and recipients, and about the activities to address marine litter and microplastics to which funding was allocated. All those who took the floor to propose funding sources stressed the importance of including the whole range of donor categories, both traditional and non-traditional, at all levels. Suggestions included the Global Environment Facility, the World Bank, the Green Climate Fund, multilateral development banks, regional banks, multilateral environmental agreements such as the Basel Convention and UNEP regional seas conventions, bilateral donor countries, and the private sector, including large foundations and individual philanthropists. Many participants said that it was important to understand the requirements of each donor to facilitate recipient countries' access to the funds and to overcome some of the obstacles that they were experiencing, as well as to learn from successes.

98. Some representatives suggested that once such information had been collected, it could be analysed to ascertain not only the best financing option for each problem but also what was missing at the global level in terms of financial opportunities. Furthermore, the needs of individual countries and the priorities of donors could be matched to increase the chances that funding applications would be accepted. It might also be possible to see whether the funding was actually contributing to the resolution of the problem to which it was allocated.

99. Although one representative considered that extended producer responsibility was a political tool rather than a technical or financial resource, several others, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed their support for the inclusion in the database of information on such schemes. One of them drew attention to the body of knowledge available within the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and in academic papers on the issue and proposed that such information be compiled in an analytical document to help inform members of the expert group.

100. Several representatives stressed the need for the inventory to include management of the whole life cycle, including waste prevention, management and disposal, and the development of alternatives. Another representative stressed the importance of a holistic approach to addressing marine litter and microplastics to ensure that the matter was covered from all angles and at all stages of the life cycle, so that one country's efforts were not impeded by the inaction of others. He suggested that a legally binding global instrument could enforce such an approach.

101. One representative recalled a proposal that the secretariat invite Member States to submit in writing relevant information available to them, which would allow a great deal of information to be compiled with relative ease. Information recently gathered through initiatives run by the G-20 and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, although not comprehensive, could also prove useful as input. Such methods should enable an inventory to be compiled before the fourth meeting. Another representative stressed that a robust report should be prepared well in advance of the fourth meeting so that there would be ample time to consider it properly.

102. Other issues mentioned in relation to financing, particularly for developing countries, included end-of-life taxes for electronic and electrical equipment that were paid in the exporting country, making it difficult for the country in which the equipment finished as waste to claim the money. The lack of capacity, particularly in least developed countries, to implement the collection of taxes, fees, charges and fines for waste disposal meant that there remained significant untapped resources in certain countries.

103. With regard to technical resources or mechanisms, one representative said that the private sector represented a huge technical resource with expertise across the entire plastic value chain. He also drew attention to the Incubation Network run by Second Muse and Circulate Capital, which provided support to help ocean-plastic-related initiatives to become fundable. Another representative drew attention to numerous other technical resources, such as the products and toolkits of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter, the technical guidelines on plastic waste of the Basel Convention, and the Partnership on Plastic Waste established under that convention. She stressed the benefit of collating the various resources on offer.

104. One representative emphasized the need for technical assistance to address the whole life cycle of plastics, with a particular focus on prevention and upstream measures in line with the waste hierarchy. In relation to waste management, she proposed looking at best practices for waste picker integration and the impact of technical assistance in reducing leakages along the different points of the life cycle, possibly presented in the form of a matrix.

C. Methodology for assessment of effectiveness

105. The Chair, introducing the agenda item, drew attention to the expert group's mandate to analyse the effectiveness of existing and potential response options and activities with regard to marine litter and microplastics, as set out in paragraph 7 (d) of resolution 4/6.

106. A representative of the secretariat introduced document UNEP/AHEG/2019/3/5. An external expert then outlined a proposed methodology for analysing the effectiveness of existing and potential response options and activities in contributing to the long-term elimination of discharge of marine plastic litter and microplastics into the oceans.

107. In the ensuing discussion, several representatives asked for clarification of what the document meant by effectiveness, with one representative saying that some kind of benchmark was needed. Another representative advised participants to consult the *Global Environment Outlook 6* report, which included a section on policy effectiveness. She added that more information was needed about how much detail the effectiveness analysis should address and the methodology should take that into account. The external expert said that useful methodologies to assess effectiveness might evaluate the comprehensiveness of response options and actions, such as whether they were addressing the full life cycle and whether the response options were having an impact on all environmental and geographic zones.

108. Several representatives pointed out that the proposed methodology addressed the issue of marine litter and microplastics at the national and subnational levels, rather than treating it as the global problem that it was, according to paragraph 7 (d) of resolution 4/6.

109. One representative, referring to the life-cycle approach, said that pre-production plastic waste should be tackled – for example, by addressing the raw materials used. He wondered why the document mentioned riverbeds but not other geographic areas.

110. One representative said that if the final goal was to reduce plastic litter and microplastics in the ocean, the analysis was too complex. It had too many focus areas, and the final chart with various colours was unclear and should be linked to effectiveness.

111. One representative said that she would prefer the coverage of the life cycle, which currently had three phases, to use more common terms such as “upstream” and “downstream”. Also, the document referred to restricting the scope of the analysis to the response options developed specifically to combat marine litter, thus excluding many other possible response options, such as waste management, which responded not only to the marine litter issue but to environmental issues at large. The word “compliance”, which was used in the document, normally referred to a legal obligation, but since many actions that were not legally binding could also be used, a broader term such as “implementation” or “reporting” could be used. She wondered why there was so much emphasis on a distinction between binding and voluntary actions, and how that distinction was related to effectiveness. Information about the proposed timing of the various phases would be useful.

112. The external expert said that “compliance” had been used in the context of a traditional framework for including reporting and gathering information across the life cycle. Given the comments from the group, she would use the term “implementation” instead. She added that the distinction between binding and voluntary actions was a means of obtaining a global picture, rather than a measure of effectiveness.

Discussions held in the informal breakout groups on stocktaking and on the methodology for assessment of effectiveness

113. Earlier in the meeting, under agenda item 2 (c), it had been determined that informal breakout groups 1 and 2 would each discuss both sub-items 6 (a) (stocktaking) and 6 (c) (methodology for assessment of effectiveness) together. The discussions of the informal breakout groups on both sub-items and the ensuing discussions in plenary are reflected in section VII.A of the present report.

114. In the context of effectiveness, the topic of partnerships had also been discussed during the breakout groups. During those discussions, it had also been noted that the issue of partnerships was a cross-cutting issue and therefore did not require consideration as a stand-alone topic in the preparations for the fifth session of the Environment Assembly. It had been acknowledged that partnerships were nevertheless essential for achieving the ad hoc expert group’s goals and that it would be useful to collect examples of successful partnerships, including public-private partnerships at the national, regional and global levels, and to issue a call for presentations on the subject in time for the fourth meeting of the expert group.

115. In the discussion that ensued after the presentation to the plenary of the feedback from the breakout groups on the effectiveness analysis, the secretariat was requested to prepare a proposal for a simplified version of the analysis to expedite the intersessional work.

116. The Chair subsequently invited a representative of the secretariat to present the proposal.

117. In her presentation, the representative of the secretariat explained the proposed simplified approach, which included an opportunity for members of the expert group to submit examples of effectiveness analysis approaches, and said that a summary of the submissions would be made available by January 2020. A pilot study would then be undertaken during the intersessional period and the initial findings presented to the expert group at its fourth meeting for discussion on the best way forward. As had been proposed by several representatives at the meeting, there should also be opportunities for the submission of updates to the reports submitted during the first two meetings of the expert group, as well as potential response options, which the secretariat would be asked to compile in a document for the fourth meeting.

118. One representative said that, while she appreciated the simplification efforts, the resulting version did not reflect the methodology for the analysis. Her delegation had understood that during the intersessional period Member States would be invited to review a revised methodology based on the experiences of other participants, which would then be discussed at the expert group's fourth meeting to verify its scientific integrity. She and another representative stressed that, to ensure fulfilment of the mandate of the expert group, the stocktaking exercise must feed into the analysis. In preparing the analysis, the secretariat should also take into account the comments made at the third meeting, consider existing effectiveness analysis methodologies, consult Member States intersessionally, conduct pilot studies using the updated methodology, and make all relevant documents available at least six weeks before the fourth meeting.

119. Another representative said that the overarching goal of the effectiveness analysis was to measure progress in working towards the global goals. The secretariat's proposal would identify overlaps and gaps and was therefore a good first step, although the process would require refinement.

120. Responding to the comments, the Chair confirmed that Member States would be invited to provide examples of effectiveness analyses.

121. One representative said that the effectiveness analysis was vital for future work. It would also be important for the Scientific Advisory Committee to play a role. He supported the carrying out of a pilot study during the intersessional period to avoid any delay in the expert group's work, although some discussion about methodologies was necessary, and the analysis should include indicators or frameworks.

122. The Chair said that a methodology would be piloted on the basis of input received intersessionally and presented at the expert group's fourth meeting, followed by a second phase of soliciting input after possible additional refinement.

123. One representative said that a perfect methodology would never be achieved, and that, given the complexity of the exercise, the scientific advisory committee would be well equipped to contribute a proposal on the matter.

124. A representative of the major groups and stakeholders reminded participants of the work already done pursuant to the request, in paragraph 21 of Environment Assembly resolution 2/11, for an assessment of the effectiveness of relevant international, regional and subregional governance strategies and approaches to combat marine plastic litter and microplastics, taking into consideration the relevant international, regional and subregional regulatory frameworks and identifying possible gaps and options for addressing them, including through regional cooperation and coordination. A report on that assessment (UNEA/3/INF/5) had been presented to the Environment Assembly at its third session.

125. The Chair suggested that the mandate in resolution 2/11 be referred to as the basis for any new effectiveness evaluation.

D. Scientific advisory committee

126. The Chair, introducing the item, recalled that in paragraph 2 of its resolution 4/6, the United Nations Environment Assembly had requested the Executive Director of UNEP to strengthen scientific and technological knowledge with regard to marine litter, including marine plastic litter and microplastics. In response, the Executive Director had established a scientific advisory committee consisting of scientific experts to guide and inform the development of the assessment being prepared pursuant to subparagraph 2 (b) of the resolution. While there were linkages between the activities of the expert group and those of the scientific advisory committee, the latter fell under the purview of the Executive Director and not within the expert group's mandate.

127. A representative of the secretariat, introducing document UNEP/AHEG/2019/3/INF/6, noted that the assessment would build on the 2016 UNEP report entitled *Marine Plastic Debris and Microplastics: Global Lessons and Research to Inspire Action and Guide Policy Change*. During the

assessment, the scientific advisory committee would consider the outcome of the expert group's stocktaking exercise and its work on financial and technical resources and mechanisms.

128. In the ensuing discussion, one representative noted the importance of the assessment, particularly given the lack of scientific data available on which plastics were ending up in the ocean and the pathways they were taking. Without that information, it was difficult to determine the best methodology for preventing marine plastic pollution. An update on the assessment at the expert group's fourth meeting would be useful for informing the group's future work. To avoid duplication of work, the issues of monitoring, impact analysis and other types of scientific work might best be covered by the scientific advisory committee and not form part of the expert group's work on stocktaking.

129. Another representative said that, while knowledge of the sources, pathways and impacts of marine litter was still incomplete, a tremendous amount of research had been conducted and data gathered since the publication of the 2016 UNEP report. The 2016 report had been instrumental in informing policymaking at the global, regional and national levels, and the assessment currently being prepared should provide the expert group with even better information at those levels. It was extremely useful for the expert group to be informed about the work of the scientific advisory committee. She suggested that the expert group welcome an update by the scientific advisory committee.

VIII. Other matters

130. The Chair invited representatives to raise any other matters.

131. One representative requested that the contact information of all participants in the third meeting of the ad hoc expert group be published to facilitate communication among representatives and to foster relations between States and major groups and stakeholders.

132. Some representatives expressed their preference for holding two additional meetings of the expert group before the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, underscoring the amount of work remaining to be done. Some others favoured a single meeting, however, and one of them cited the sizable workload as precisely the reason for holding a single meeting, to ensure that the intersessional work could be carried out thoroughly, that meeting documents would be available on time and that representatives would have ample time to review them. It was ultimately agreed that two meetings would be held, and that, irrespective of the number and duration of subsequent meetings, it was essential to use meeting time well and to concentrate on the group's mandate.

133. Offers to host future meetings were made by Peru and Rwanda. Antigua and Barbuda reserved the right to submit a hosting offers in the future. It was decided that the Bureau, in consultation with the secretariat, would decide on the location, duration and dates of subsequent meetings, taking into account the views of representatives and the timing of meetings of other multilateral environmental agreements.

IX. Identifying options in preparation for the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

134. The Chair invited participants to consider the draft outcome document, made available as a conference room paper, which summarized key discussions and input from the plenary meeting with a view to preparing for subsequent meetings of the expert group.

135. After a discussion during which a number of changes to the text were proposed and agreed on, the participants adopted the outcome document, which is annexed to the present report.

X. Closure of the meeting

136. Following the customary exchange of courtesies, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 5.30 p.m. on Friday, 22 November 2019.

Annex

Outcome document of the third meeting of the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics

A. Outcome of the third meeting of the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics

1. The ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics met in Bangkok from 18 to 22 November 2019. The present outcome document summarizes key discussions from the meeting, based on inputs received from participants during the plenary and pursuant to the agenda adopted on the first day of the meeting, in particular to inform the work of the expert group in 2020.
2. The expert group considered that the fourth meeting should preferably take place in May 2020; the fifth meeting should preferably take place in November 2020; and future meetings would take place at the headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Nairobi, unless formal offers from Member States to host a meeting were received by the secretariat by 31 December 2019 at the latest.
3. The expert group entrusted its bureau with deciding on the dates and venues of its future meetings, in close consultation with Member States, by 31 January 2020 at the latest.
4. With the aim of making full use of the intersessional period for the future process, the expert group particularly highlighted the following general guidance:
 - The mandate of the expert group is laid out in paragraph 7 of United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 4/6 and paragraph 10 of Environment Assembly resolution 3/7.
 - Other paragraphs under resolutions 4/6 and 3/7, as well as other relevant United Nations Environment Assembly resolutions, such as resolutions 1/6 and 2/11, remain relevant to inform the work of the expert group.
 - Future deliberations should build on the work already undertaken during previous meetings of the expert group.

B. Guidance to the secretariat of the United Nations Environment Programme on the preparations for the fourth meeting of the expert group

1. Stocktaking (paragraph 7 (a) of Environment Assembly resolution 4/6)

5. The expert group requested the secretariat to:
 - Consider relevant work undertaken by UNEP, as well as other relevant bodies of work, such as information submitted as part of studies undertaken by, for example, the Group of 20, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Regional Seas Programmes and the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal;
 - Invite voluntary contributions to the stocktaking exercise through the survey tool or through other submissions; such contributions need not be exhaustive and may address any activity considered relevant by respondents;
 - Capture a wide range of activities, bearing in mind that the exercise will not be exhaustive;
 - Provide guidance for the submission process and provide support as needed.

2. Financial and technical resources and mechanisms (paragraph 7 (b) of Environment Assembly resolution 4/6)

6. The expert group requested the secretariat to produce one report covering both aspects that will:
 - Consider existing bodies of work such as those of the Basel Convention and its Plastic Waste Partnership, the Global Partnership on Marine Litter of UNEP, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and the Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance;

- Collect information from existing sources and look at funding resources and mechanisms, such as bilateral donors and development assistance through multilateral bodies, including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, regional and subregional development banks, the United Nations system (including multilateral environmental agreements), the Global Environment Facility and other relevant sources, including national sources, as well as information from the private sector, including for-profit and non-profit institutions, foundations, capital markets, etc.;
- Promote a better understanding of the current state of play of technical and financial resources and mechanisms, including a life-cycle approach, as well as of the financing flows between key donors/financial institutions and recipients at the regional and national levels, including with regard to challenges and barriers;
- Examine new opportunities through innovative financing, including public-private partnerships, blended finance, and other approaches,¹ with the aim of identifying ways to promote cooperation;
- Gather information on existing technical resources and environmentally sound substitutes and mechanisms, addressing aspects of the whole life cycle of marine litter and microplastics, taking into consideration information from both the public and private sectors as well as civil society;
- Take into consideration other work streams, in particular the stocktaking exercise.

3. Partnerships (paragraph 7 (c) of Environment Assembly resolution 4/6)

7. The expert group requested the secretariat to:
- Continue to consider partnerships as a cross-cutting issue;
 - Present case studies and examples from relevant partnerships, including public-private and public-civil society partnerships.

4. Effectiveness (paragraph 7 (d) of Environment Assembly resolution 4/6)

8. The expert group requested the secretariat to:
- Ensure the stocktaking survey will feed into the effectiveness analysis;
 - Take into account comments provided during the third meeting of the expert group on the methodology proposed in document UNEP/AHEG/2019/3/5;
 - Consider the existing body of work on effectiveness analysis methodologies;
 - Consult Member States intersessionally on a revised methodology;
 - Make the updated methodology available 6 weeks prior to the fourth meeting of the expert group;
 - Carry out a few pilot studies by applying the updated methodology and make them available prior to the fourth meeting of the expert group;
 - Invite the scientific advisory committee to provide advice on methodological approaches related to effectiveness.

¹ During the meeting, some participants noted approaches at the national and regional levels, such as extended producer responsibility and the “polluter pays” principle.