

United Nations Environment Programme
Second informal preparatory meeting
for the fourth meeting of the
ad hoc open-ended expert group
on marine litter and microplastics
Online, 20-22 October 2020

Meeting notes from the Secretariat: Second informal preparatory meeting for the fourth meeting of the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics

I. Introduction

1. The second informal preparatory meeting for the fourth meeting of the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics was held online from Tuesday, 20 October until Thursday, 22 October 2020.

II. Opening of the meeting

2. The meeting was opened at 1 p.m. (Nairobi time (UTC+2)) by the Chair, Mr. Satoru Iino, Acting Chair of the Bureau of the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics.

3. Welcoming participants to the second informal preparatory meeting for the fourth meeting of the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and plastics, which would be held online from 9 to 13 November 2020.

4. The Chair explained that the purpose of the meeting is to make everyone aware of the agenda items to be discussed at AHEG-4, view the working documents and hear the views of participants. The Chair informed that the working documents have been finalized and translated in accordance with United Nations procedure, therefore no changes can be made to them. The documents are intended to serve as reference material and facilitate the discussions of this group. All comments will be captured during AHEG-4 and in the summary report of that meeting, which, in turn, will feed into UNEA-5.

5. This meeting focused on discussions on the potential response options pursuant to United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 3/7, subparagraph 10 (d) and the analysis of the effectiveness of existing and potential response options and activities.

III. Organizational matters

A. Agenda

6. The meeting followed the provisional agenda proposed by the Bureau in advance of the meeting:

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. Consideration of paragraph 7d) of the United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 4/6 entitled marine plastic litter and microplastics: Analysis of the effectiveness of existing and potential response options and activities (subparagraph 7d).
4. Update from the first virtual preparatory meeting and regional consultations.
5. Consideration of submissions on potential response options pursuant to paragraph 10 d) of United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 3/7 on marine litter and microplastics.
6. Outline of a draft summary on identification of options in preparation for the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

7. Other matters
8. Closure of the meeting

IV. Update on stocktaking of existing activities and action towards the long-term elimination of discharges into the oceans, to reduce marine plastic litter and microplastics.

7. Ms. Karen Raubenheimer, Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security, University of Wollongong, Australia, made a presentation on the analysis of the effectiveness of response options pursuant to UNEA resolution 4/6 paragraph 7(d). She said that eight response options were studied, chosen from information provided in relation to prior work and some reports submitted to previous UNEA meetings. Each response option is presented in the context of that response option. First, an analysis of measures across the life cycle of the response option was conducted, then indicator analysis, and finally discussion of the effectiveness of each response option. The working document available and the information document will provide more information.

8. She mentioned that the first section of the presentation provides a brief summary of the methodology, including the identification of response options, the identification of barriers and enabling conditions, and the revised methodology. The second section deals with a selection of the key findings of the analysis for the eight response option archetypes identified.

9. Ms. Raubenheimer explained that the identification of response options, barriers and enabling conditions was supported by submissions from Member States, the Scientific Advisory Committee and major groups and stakeholders, particularly regarding the methodology and the pilot studies; submissions on potential response options as requested in UNEA Res. 3/7 para. 10(d); the 2017 UNEP assessment of governance strategies; and a number of AHEG discussion papers, including the discussion papers on barriers (UNEP/AHEG/2018/1/2), national, regional and international response options (UNEP/AHEG/2018/1/3), environmental, social and economic costs and benefits (UNEP/AHEG/2018/1/4), and the feasibility and effectiveness of different response options (UNEP/AHEG/2018/1/5), the consolidated background paper of the discussion papers (UNEP/AHEG/2018/2/2) as well as the report submitted in delivery of UNEA resolution (Res.) 2/11, Combating marine plastic litter and microplastics: an assessment of the effectiveness of relevant international, regional and subregional governance strategies and approaches (UNEP/AHEG/2018/1/INF/3).

10. She explained that the methodology and working document were revised as per the comments and submissions received. The revised methodology first provides analysis of measures to address the life cycle of the response option, including discussion of barriers and enabling conditions. The analysis of indicators was developed on the basis of submissions received and is applied to existing instruments relevant to the response option. Indicators are grouped into input, process and performance indicators. A final discussion on the effectiveness of the response option is based on suggestions made by Member States and includes some key findings from the analysis of life-cycle measures and indicator analysis. The report concludes with a table summarizing each response option archetype to illustrate its contribution to solving the global problem.

11. She presented in detail eight response option archetypes (see Annex I for the presentation) as well as a final table which summarizes the findings, providing an overview of the contributions of the response options to solving the global problem.

12. One representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries, mentioned that they welcomed the fact that the document refers to both UNEA 3/6 and 4/7 as sources of the mandate for this work. While they do not agree with some of the assessments in the document, they consider the methodology applied to be fit for purpose. Regarding a new global agreement, their view is that its feasibility should be determined on the basis not only of its complexity but also of the impact that it could achieve. The analysis does not go into enough detail and does not distinguish between the impacts of a voluntary agreement versus those of a legally binding one.

13. This representative also noted that the different response options were not mutually exclusive - they can be combined. A new global agreement could have both voluntary and legally binding elements. Such an agreement could and should strengthen the existing international framework and establish global standards across the lifecycle of plastics. Regional and national measures may be effective on those scales, but their effectiveness at the international level has not been assessed. A comparison of the effectiveness of different options on different scales and for different stages of the lifecycle is therefore missing. However, they support the methodology for the purposes of supporting

discussions on response options at AHEG-4. Finally, they would appreciate clarification of how the Secretariat considers that points 4 (a), (b) and (d) of resolution 4/6 will be addressed at AHEG-4, given that the summary findings will already have been presented and discussed during the preparatory meetings.

14. One representative highlighted that out of maturity, feasibility, time frame and impact, the most important are feasibility and time frame. The current assessment contains two types of time frame: the time needed to formulate a framework and the timespan covered by the framework itself. This is not consistent and makes the study less credible. He stressed that objectivity was lacking, particularly on the section concerning an international framework. Trainer training, for example, can also apply to national action plans. A correct evaluation of such plans should mention positives such as detailed countermeasures that are specific to country circumstances and can be developed and implemented fairly quickly, but also negatives, for instance that there may be a gap between countries in terms of the quality of such countermeasures.

15. Regarding a new international framework, this representative noted that the positive side would be that it may promote uniformity with regard to implementation. On the other hand, binding targets should be clarified before the discussion and take time to develop, which would not allow for the implementation of countermeasures that take into account each country's circumstances. Finally, the assessment contains findings related both to the framework ((a), (c) and (d)) and to the content of activities ((b), (g) and (h)). We should first discuss the content and then move on to the framework.

16. Another representative mentioned three points: (i) there is an omission - the absence of voluntary national initiatives involving the Government and the private sector (the Global Plastic Action Partnership and the G20 Implementation Framework for Actions on Marine Plastic Litter, among others). He would welcome (ii) a clear explanation on how certain approaches were considered as archetypes, e.g. design standards, and (iii) an emphasis on how the different options can complement one another.

17. One representative agreed with previous points raised, particularly appreciate the inclusion of the table under section 5, which summarizes the analysis in a digestible format. However, she found the narrative a little difficult to follow because of the terminology used and the structure of the document. She is also concerned by instances of prejudicial and policy-prescriptive language - e.g. para. 13 - "could" would be more appropriate than "can"; para. 19 (b) (2) (i) - "could require strengthening" would reflect the range of options available.

18. Moreover, the summary appears to proffer interpretations of various MEAs. It is for States parties to each MEA to interpret the substantive provisions thereof in the appropriate forum. At the same time, it is inappropriate for AHEG to suggest changes to existing bodies' mandates. Clarification on how the pressures referred to for each response option were defined and identified would be welcome. It would also be useful to know why only one pressure has been identified for each response option and life-cycle phase, given that there are often a number of different pressures, some of which may not be specific to a response option. Lastly, it would be helpful to know why no mention was made of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter in response option A, on strengthening the international framework, since it was an existing global platform for addressing marine litter at all stages of the life cycle.

19. One representative thanked Ms. Raubenheimer for the presentation and the Secretariat for its efforts in putting together the summary document (UNEP/AHEG/4/4), however believed that the process behind this summary is somewhat difficult to understand. The indicators have not been applied in the same way as in the pilot studies presented to Member States in August. For example, in the pilot study, the "maturity" indicator was described as "not applicable" to the potential response option of a new international framework, largely because such a framework is still at the proposal phase. However, in the summary document the maturity indicator is rated as low, albeit for the same reason. Similarly, the "feasibility" and "time frame" indicators were not used in the pilot studies with regard to that response option. Indeed, we would not have supported the application of these criteria to analyse the effectiveness of a new international framework. The maturity, feasibility and time frame of such a response option will significantly depend on the type of obligations proposed and the will of political leaders to meet them. These indicators cannot be applied to an analysis of the effectiveness of a new international framework that has yet to be defined.

20. Moreover, as of now, it is not currently possible to assess the degree to which the different response options will contribute to reducing the volume of plastic waste in the marine environment. We simply do not have the necessary data and information available for that purpose. The document

does clearly demonstrate the need for a monitoring and reporting framework to harmonize data collection in order to assess the progress made in reducing the amount of marine litter entering our oceans. The AHEG should therefore focus its efforts on discussing response options. We appreciate that the effectiveness analysis gives an overview of key aspects of different response options. However, we would stress that this document will not be able to replace a substantial discussion by the AHEG on potential response options, which to our understanding is planned under agenda item 5.

21. Lastly, one representative believed that the analysis of the options presented leads to a legal framework that takes into account international issues and the circular economy. Such a legal instrument would pave the way for national strategies and options, which must be adapted to the specificities of each country in order to achieve the objectives set. It is therefore important to have a common strategy in order to work together at the global level. In doing so, it would assist our governments to respond to the issues and serve as a model for efficiently dealing with marine plastic pollution.

22. A representative of the secretariat thanked Member States for their comments and highlighted that with regards to the process, the document was drawn up on the basis of scientific assessments. The methodology was discussed in a transparent and participative process, which was put in place to ensure that the group would be comfortable with the methodology and choices made. It should be emphasized that the analysis reflects the submissions that were provided by Member States and, thus, the methodological approach was limited to those submissions.

23. After a 30 minutes break, Ms. Raubenheimer provided some answers to the questions raised and explained that they have received a number of comments and statements that have been valuable in developing the methodology. The pilot studies presented were not comprehensive. They were used to test application of the methodology. They then received and incorporated further comments. They were asked not to compare response options, which is why they are separate. They were also asked to build on the previous work of this forum and so we used that to identify the pressures and barriers. There was also a request to simplify so we consolidated to one pressure. The document was meant to cover the full range of response options and not to reach conclusions about strengths and weaknesses of response options.

24. One representative stressed that the global COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of using the latest scientific advice to ensure appropriate responses of countries to issues of global importance. With the current uncertainty over when negotiations on resolutions at UNEA 5 might take place, he asked the chair or the secretariat to clarify what process will be put in place to ensure the analysis of effectiveness and other documents remain current and continue to take note of the latest scientific evidence.

25. The Chair opened up for a second round of comments and questions from Member States and wished to hear more from Stakeholders.

26. One representative commented that he believed that response options at the national, regional and international levels can be complementary. They were in agreement with previous comments about the absence of an analysis of a voluntary vs legally binding framework. Many Member States in their submissions expressed the need for a legally binding treaty that would also include some voluntary measures. An agreement would fill in the geographical gaps in regional action and harmonize and simplify reporting and tracking systems. A global agreement also levels the playing field for national measures. There can be common monitoring methods. It respects national circumstances and takes into account the respective capacities of countries. Voluntary frameworks are good, but have not been so successful as the rate production of plastic and its discharge continue to increase, therefore their vision is to find an effective global solution to eliminate the discharge of marine litter and microplastics.

27. Another representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries recognized that countries have done quite some work at the national and regional levels, but without an international framework they are facing unsolved challenges. Even when they employ a market framework, they still face challenges. That is why they vote as a whole for an international framework to respond to new and emerging challenges.

28. One representative commented about the previous two interventions on a new international framework, with the opinion that the impact can be higher if a larger number of items are incorporated into the framework or if it is legally binding. But by adding a large number of items there may be lower feasibility and make the time frame longer.

29. The Chair recalled that so far there has been general discussions on the criteria, framework, timing, assumptions, limitation of knowledge, evaluation, relationship between different response

options that are not mutually exclusive and can be formulated and conducted jointly. Less attention has been paid to other specific response options, e.g. microplastics or regional collaboration. So now he wished to reopen the floor and encourage everyone to engage. He finally recalled that the interventions during AHEG 4 will be recorded in the report of the meeting and annexed to the report by the Executive Director of UNEP to UNEA 5.

30. One representative recalled a question still unanswered and requested clarification on how the Chair and the Secretariat see the discussions on points (a) and (b) of resolution 4/6 at AHEG-4, and if there is a need to expect a replication of these discussions or something new, so that they can prepare.

31. The Secretariat responded that this virtual preparatory meeting and the previous one are informal moments for engaging in further discussions. All the issues will be reviewed and revisited at AHEG-4, which is a formal meeting. The programme of work and agenda have already been proposed - where a balanced approach with regard to the time allocated to each item has been proposed.

32. Concerning UNEA-5, the Secretariat explained that UNEA Bureau decided, on 8 October, to organize UNEA-5 in two parts, as proposed by the President of UNEA. The date for the opening of the first part would be 22 February 2021, with the meeting being adjourned after one or two days. It would resume in February 2022. During the first part, there would be an opportunity to have political input and to make urgent procedural decisions. The second part would deal with all the substantive issues that are on the table.

33. At the annual subcommittee meeting last week, the decision was confirmed and broadly supported by Member States. The question arises of what is substantive and what is procedural. There is no clear rule on this. It will be for countries to decide. When it comes to marine litter and the expert group, the mandate ends at AHEG-4. If there is any kind of follow-up from AHEG-4, it will be dealt with by UNEA itself. It remains to be decided by Member States if this will occur during the first or second part of UNEA-5.

34. The Chair summarized exchanges held during day one. Numerous important interventions were made. This is a rehearsal for AHEG-4. He stressed that for those who have made interventions this day, it is important to review their remarks and digest those of others. He encouraged to provide the Secretariat with scripts for interventions prior to AHEG-4.

35. Many participants pointed out that some archetypes could be considered as elements of others, that some response options can be formulated and implemented in a combined manner and that different response options can be complementary to one another. Some assumptions were made in the working document. The Chair stressed that participants should be careful not to assume anything when it comes to the evaluation of effectiveness. As discussed at many opportunities, effectiveness is conditional and circumstantial. It depends on application, timing, how to implement, etc. The international, regional and national levels are not mutually exclusive. There is no hierarchical relationship.

36. Some participants mentioned that important ongoing countermeasures (GPML, G20) are not addressed in the document. Instead of trying to revise the working document, let us state clearly in our interventions that, for example, there is a clear countermeasure in the shape of GPML. This will ensure that the matter is reflected in the AHEG-4 meeting report. Last but not least, the Chair said there were a few interventions calling to look ahead rather than focusing on the analysis of effectiveness. Based on the results of the analysis, many participants proposed that specific response options should be pursued. The meeting concluded for Day 1.

Day 2 – 21 October

37. Day two started with the intervention of a representative which could not take place the day before due to technical problems, with thanks to the Secretariat for helping fixing it. He emphasized regional and national measures are also important. The measures in section G of the document, strengthening solid waste management using regulatory and market-based instruments, are among the most important measures at the national or local levels. It is important as neighbouring countries have a high motivation to protect their neighbouring seas. Corporate monitoring should be conducted. His country has already developed an international harmonized monitoring method. Cooperation in monitoring at the regional level could assist in accumulating scientific knowledge. South-east Asia is already promoting this monitoring. National marine litter actions plan, in section F, are important as they directly address marine litter discharge. The national plan is the basis of all measures. There

could be flexible measures depending on the conditions in the countries. Solid waste management could be integrated into the national action plans. We should decide on all measurable targets and evaluate them on the basis of the PDCA cycle. This would make plans more effective.

38. The Chair wrap up discussion held on the previous day saying that they looked at effectiveness analysis, with a presentation from Ms. Raubenheimer on the results of the effectiveness analysis study, along with key findings. Eight response option archetypes were analysed. Five indicators were applied: scale, maturity, feasibility, time frame and impact. After the presentation, we exchanged comments and feedback. There were quite a number of overarching interventions. For example, there is a correlation between response options. Some should be considered as elements of others. Some can be implemented jointly with others. Simply put, they are not mutually exclusive. Secondly, framework and content were sometimes conflated in a single response option. We need to distinguish between the two. A global framework is presented in the document as a single option, but can be approached in a number of ways and can encompass a broader approach including a regional framework, regional action plans, etc.

39. As for the neutrality of the analysis, there were calls for caution regarding prejudicial language and assumptions. We must avoid assuming anything prior to the evaluation. We must also be careful with our language when we say “effective” or “ineffective”. There was also a call for caution regarding the fact that we have not yet been able to assess the degree to which the different options can be effective. We need more data and information in this regard. The study mentions two timeframes: the time needed to formulate a framework and the implementation timespan of the framework. These are completely different. Some Member States mentioned that important voluntary actions (such as the Global Plastic Action Partnership, GPML, the G20 implementation framework) are not clearly addressed in the document. It was argued that these actions have already had a significant impact and should thus be taken into account.

40. The application of indicators to a new international framework should cover not only international effectiveness but also regional and national effectiveness in a holistic manner. Overall, we have a common understanding that no policy measures can be evaluated as universally effective or ineffective. It is important to think about the circumstances needed to enable the measures to be effective, concluded the Chair.

41. One representative took the floor as the last intervention under this agenda item and mentioned that the effectiveness of a new global framework was not properly reflected in the analysis. She indicated that there is a need of a global framework to help countries address plastic pollution in upstream activities and enable governments to enact legislation and adopt other measures to reduce plastic waste.

V. Update from the first virtual preparatory meeting and regional consultations.

a) Report back from Regional consultation meetings

42. Three regional consultations have been convened: Asia-Pacific, Africa and GRULAC. All relevant documents from these consultations have been made available on the AHEG website.

43. The Chair provided a summary of the regional consultation held in Asia-Pacific and available at: <https://environmentassembly.unenvironment.org/regional-consultations#asia>

44. A representative from Africa provided a summary of the regional consultation held in his region, available at: <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/34196/African%20Group%20Item%204.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

45. Finally, a representative from GRULAC provided a summary of the consultations held in his region, and available in Annex II of this report.

46. A representative from Norway provided an update about their regional work under the auspices of the Nordic Council of Ministers for the Environment and Climate. A new report by the Council suggests elements and approaches for a new global agreement, covering the whole lifecycle of plastics. The report, which was launched on Monday, 19 October 2020, outlines a number of interesting proposals for how a new global agreement could be designed as an effective tool to combat plastic pollution. The report can be accessed at: www.nordicreport2020.com/ as well as an executive summary and three thematic summaries. A four-minute cartoon-style video that conveys

the main gist of the report have also been produced. The content of the website will be translated into all six official United Nations languages.

b) *Report back from the first virtual preparatory meeting.*

47. The Chair informed that the first virtual preparatory was held on 28 September. Updates from the Secretariat on the stocktaking and inventory exercises were provided, as well as on potential response options; and started to talk about the effectiveness analysis.

48. At this meeting the Chair also proposed to take responsibility for drafting a summary, with the support of the Secretariat and the Bureau. The report would cover the full AHEG process from AHEG-1 to AHEG-4. The purpose would be to convey results smoothly to UNEA-5, as a basis for discussion. The summary would be discussed the next day.

VI. Consideration of submissions on potential response options pursuant to paragraph 10 d) of United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 3/7.

49. The Secretariat has made available in English working document UNEP/AHEG/4/5 (Identification of potential options for continued work for consideration by the United Nations Environment Assembly) and it is currently being translated into all United Nations languages. In addition, the Secretariat has also made available information document UNEP/AHEG/4/INF/10 (Submissions on potential options for continued work for consideration by the United Nations Environment Assembly), only in English. These are the two reference documents.

50. The Secretariat also indicated that the order of the response options headings does not reflect level of importance or carry any specific weight over others listed. The document itself aims to facilitate discussions on the range of views on response options as per the approach taken in AHEG-1. As AHEG is not a negotiation forum, more than one response option within any given grouping or heading may be considered for UNEA-5.

51. The Secretariat listed the main milestones in the AHEG Process which started in 2018:

- AHEG 1 (May 2018): submissions, the preparation of various documents (UNEP/AHEG/2018/2, 3 and 4), unanimous agreement at that maintaining the status quo was not an option
- AHEG 2 (December 2018): the compilation of documents (UNEP/AHEG/2018/2/2), discussions, submissions led to an outcome document that led to renewed mandate at UNEA-4
- AHEG 3 (November 2019): building on previous work, an outcome document that guided work related to resolution 4/6
- An intersessional period: additional submissions: 14 from Member States, regional groups and other groups of Member States and 6 from major groups and stakeholders
- AHEG 4 to take place in November 2020

52. A representative of the Secretariat gave a detailed presentation on the range of views expressed by Member States and Stakeholders on submitted response options. At international level those views are organised per categories in order to facilitate their readability on (i) a vision for combating marine litter and microplastics, (ii) existing instruments, (iii) global standards and guidelines, (iv) the nature of a relevant instrument, (v) technological (technical responses), (vi) economic/financial responses, Similar way to classify the wide variety of views is being proposed for regional and national level response options. The full presentation is available in Annex III of this document.

53. The Chair thanked the Secretariat and informed that the presentation on the range of views on the response options is uploaded to the virtual preparatory meeting website (<https://environmentassembly.unenvironment.org/virtual-preparatory-meetings#second>). Also, he reiterated that regarding the discussion on potential response options, what matters most as an

outcome is our discussion, not the working document, and opened the floor for questions and comments.

54. A first representative stressed that this document should be used to understand the characteristics of each response option. It should not be used to count the number of countries supporting each option. Therefore, as an input to the discussion at UNEA-5, we want to see the AHEG-4 meeting report summarizing the characteristics of each option after a broad range of opinions have been collected from Member States, instead of making recommendations on specific options.

55. The many views expressed on an international framework recommend, before discussing the nature of the framework, to discuss first the content of the activities and initiatives to be implemented and promoted as countermeasures. As affirmed at AHEG-1, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to combating marine litter. Therefore, it is important to tackle specific issues in accordance with national circumstances and challenges.

56. Regarding the overview of submitted response options, in para. 12, this representative have identified the importance of sharing a common global long-term vision, referring for example to the Osaka Blue Ocean Vision, shared as a common global vision at the G20 summit last year, setting out a clear vision to reduce additional pollution by marine plastic litter to zero by 2050 through a comprehensive life-cycle approach. A total of 86 countries and regions, including members of FEALAC and ASEAN, have shared the Vision to date.

57. Finally, he emphasized the importance of having a multi-stakeholder platform, which is mentioned in para. 7. Specifically, mention is made of the establishment of a platform/system to share information on technical and financial resources and to facilitate technical and financial support or cooperation, including innovative solutions and approaches.

58. Another representative commented that it was great to see how submissions have matured and increased in number since AHEG-1 in May 2018. She recalled UNEP's 2017 assessment of existing government strategies to prevent marine plastic litter at the international, regional and subregional levels as a good reference for potential response options. The report demonstrated fundamental gaps in existing international legal and policy frameworks, rendering them ill-equipped to deal with the problem of marine plastic litter and microplastics. Furthermore, it was agreed at AHEG-1 in 2018 that maintaining the status quo is not an option.

59. Of utmost importance is the urgent need to put in place targeted measures throughout the entire lifecycle of plastics, from production to waste management. Five core global functions are outlined in the majority of the submissions made to the expert group: (1) a common global goal; (2) a common monitoring and reporting framework; (3) a science-policy interface to drive continuous knowledge generation to support policy development; (4) common national plastic management plans; (5) financing and capacity-building to support countries to step up their ambitions.

60. Most submissions emphasize the need for a new framework, either legally binding or following a hybrid approach. This representative saw no existing framework that could deliver these functions in this manner, nor they believe that another voluntary framework could lead to this. A long-lasting permanent framework would provide predictability and show the global community that we take seriously our responsibility to tackle this issue. There are growing public calls for such a framework. A binding agreement would bring the issue to the top of the political agenda. A global agreement with certain binding commitments is necessary, including to ensure proper reporting. A voluntary reporting framework will not deliver information on whether we are meeting our goals or not.

61. Another representative draw attention to the following key issues:

1. There is a need for clearer differentiation in the document of high impact avoidance mechanisms and lower impact measures.
2. Avoidance should be the first priority for plastic packaging as it is the polymer application that is least recyclable. Moreover, avoidance will save resources and promote health. Measures that promote avoidance of plastic packaging should therefore be more prominent.
3. More emphasis is needed on education
4. Recycling of plastic polymers will only be possible if the exact properties of the material are communicated. Legislation requiring manufacturers to share the material composition of plastic polymers is therefore needed.
5. Youth have an important role to play in preventing marine plastic litter

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62. A representative was pleased that the categories of regional and national which are found in the mandates are fully mentioned. It is a helpful way of organizing the information, and they appreciated that it is not presented in hierarchical fashion.
63. Another representative noted that the distribution of marine plastic litter in the ocean is poorly identified. A better understanding of how marine debris is distributed from land-based sources is crucial. Moreover, ghost fishing gear is an important issue, so developing innovative solutions to detect ghost gear using automated underwater vehicles and artificial intelligence is key. Also moving to a circular economy could deliver a large no. of benefits to all economies by reducing marine debris, creating new jobs, improving the supply of raw materials, increasing competitiveness, stimulating innovation and boosting economic growth.
64. Many representatives referred to the report released by WWF, in cooperation with the Boston Consulting Group and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation on the business case for a UN treaty on plastic pollution. Some 30 leading global companies have joined the call for such a global treaty. It is becoming increasingly clear that relying on a voluntary framework will not suffice and proposed to present it during AHEG-4.
65. A representative speaking on behalf of a group of countries mentioned that the document provided a good overview of the different response options submitted, welcoming the more granular level of detail. They noted it is necessary to assess the validity of each response option. However, the grouping used in the document is different to that used in the analysis of effectiveness paper.
66. They called for the identification of Member States, major groups and stakeholders in relation to the different elements of the response options identified. It is necessary to do so for response options to be factual and objective for clarity. More insight on the link between document 4/5 and the Chair's summary would be welcome. It remains unclear how the discussion on the document during these preparation meetings would feed into AHEG-4. There is concern that the discussions will just be replicated, losing time for real discussion at AHEG-4.
67. Another representative stressed that in their proposal there would be feasibility analysis under each option. Only with feasible practices can these be implementable. Both "litter" and "debris" are used, but is there a difference? If not we propose using only one term.
68. Many representatives noted that the mandate of AHEG is not to make recommendations but to provide a slate of options for UNEA-5. In order to inform UNEA discussions, we should ensure that the report includes how we can draw on existing initiatives and avoid duplication
69. Many recognized the Osaka Blue Vision is a good starting point. Some would also like to highlight the Ocean Plastics Charter which encourages action and cooperation among governments, businesses and organizations. To date, 26 governments and 70 businesses have endorsed the Charter.
70. Many representatives mentioned that a global agreement can help countries to deal with the upstream matters
71. Some Asian countries explored the key elements of a global treaty. We articulated the need for a holistic, global policy framework. We need a life-cycle approach to land and sea-based sources with specific, time-bound, nationally determined targets monitored through common methodologies to track progress at the global level.
72. Another representative thought that developing an inventory of sources of marine plastic litter and understanding the distribution of such litter were very important. Sharing scientific knowledge is essential to the development of efficient countermeasures and the promotion of science-based policymaking. His country has contributed to the harmonization of monitoring methods for marine plastics on the ocean surface. We developed guidelines with experts from other countries. They also launched an initiative to create a data-sharing system for marine plastic pollution globally and can contribute to understanding the distribution of marine plastic litter and to the accumulation of scientific knowledge to promote science-based policy making.

Day 3 – 22 October 2020

The Chair introduced the final day of the second virtual preparatory meeting.

Agenda item 5: Consideration of submissions on potential response options pursuant to paragraph 10 d) of United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 3/7 (continued)

73. One representative highlighted that plastic waste is a global transboundary issue that requires global and regional communities to galvanise efforts aimed at addressing it. The representative indicated there are gaps in existing regional and international frameworks and suggested that a global framework should be developed to close the gaps in a circular manner. They added that the global framework should respect national circumstances and issues and should not be a punitive agreement but should encourage a suite of measures at national and regional levels to support countries in knowledge and capacity building to tackle marine litter. Although there are gaps in existing frameworks, there is still value in leveraging them, including the ASEAN Framework of Action on Marine Debris and the G20 Implementation Framework for Actions on Marine Plastic Litter. They added any proposed actions in global agreements should be evidence and science based.

74. One representative stated it is clear the AHEG has identified a new global agreement as an international response option as per our mandate from UNEA 3/7 10 (d) (ii) and that there is significant support of a new global agreement to be considered as a potential option for continued work by the UNEA as per UNEA 3/7 para 10 (d) (v). The representative expressed that a new global agreement would be beneficial for governments and the private sector, providing predictability and stability. However, they did not envisage a strict and detailed agreement, rather an agreement that provides a permanent framework to work within and that can progress over time.

75. The representative highlighted the need for a common long-term vision and objective in a global agreement. Such as, the UNEA-3 zero vision, the Osaka Blue Vision, the SDG Target 14.1 or the G7 Ocean Plastic Charter. The representative added that national plastics management plans could form the core commitments of a new global agreement, but countries should be allowed flexibility in how their plans are developed to fit national and local circumstances. The global agreement could include a mechanism to support countries in developing these action plans, facilitate learning and cooperation across countries and regions. Such plans would cover both land and sea-based sources and consider plastics management across the entire life-cycle.

76. The representative raised the suggestion of sustainability criteria. International sustainability criteria could be developed to provide governments with a toolbox to achieve the strategic goals of an agreement. The new agreement could formulate obligations or guidance for States to promote industry compliance with the performance measures set out in the sustainability criteria. This could be achieved through the development of National Plastics Sustainability Standards and National Plastics Management Plans (NPMPs).

77. Finally, the representative highlighted that a global agreement could provide a number of other common global functions: monitoring and assessment, reporting, financing and capacity building, strengthening the science-policy interface and education and awareness raising.

78. One representative highlighted the importance of waste management for land-based sources and the importance that national action plans take into account the national circumstances of each country, adding that an international framework and cooperation should benefit national action plans. The representative indicated that it may be effective to expand participation in and improve existing frameworks, such as the G20 and ASEAN. The representative explained that the establishment of a new legally binding global agreement is important but given limited time and human resources it is more effective to strengthen and expand existing frameworks to quickly react to this urgent issue.

79. One representative expressed their interest that the next AHEG meeting is focused more on the identification of existing and future opportunities for technical and financial instruments and mechanisms, especially in relation to the circular economy and measures that tackle the whole of the life cycle, including for Africa and the Mediterranean region.

80. Another representative stated the need for a common vision and objectives and emphasized the importance of flexibility in the global agreement, allowing national action plans to deal with the challenges of plastic pollution within their own context. The representative added a global agreement would build on work of existing forums, such as regional seas programmes, the Basel Convention and the IMO action plan. They continued that the agreement should be focused on the entire life cycle, including greater action upstream, and should include environmentally sound waste management. They then highlighted a number of cross-cutting issues, for example that action needs to be taken on the basis of science, monitoring and reporting needs to be defined and financial issues need to be addressed so that countries are able to implement that agreement and live up to their obligations. The representative finished by emphasizing that regardless of the time needed to develop

the global agreement, existing and ongoing efforts to reduce plastic waste should continue to run in parallel.

81. One representative highlighted the work that needs to be done at regional and national level, including waste management.

82. The Chair clarified that the mandate of the UNEA resolution is to identify options and illustrate the meaning, but not go as far to draft it.

83. One representative expressed support for the inclusion, at AHEG-4, of presentations on the WWF/BCG/EMF business report and on the Nordic Council report.

84. One representative agreed that existing frameworks have an important role to play, highlighting the Ocean Plastics Charter and the G20 implementation framework, but they do not preclude the negotiation of a new global agreement.

85. One representative stated that the AHEG should highlight several options for further work, including a global agreement, and these should not repeat what was said at UNEA-4.

86. The Chair concluded agenda item 5. They highlighted that international, regional and national categories are mutually reinforcing, but each come with their own list of response options submitted by Member States.

87. The Chair highlighted points raised during the discussion, including the need for a long-term shared vision, the need for a multi-stakeholder platform, the role of existing frameworks (Ocean Plastics Charter, G20 framework, GPML, among others) and the proposal for a new global agreement/framework/instrument. Such a framework may include a common goal, PDSA cycle, monitoring and reporting, knowledge-sharing, a scientific database, financing and capacity-building. The Chair added the global framework should support the implementation of national action plans. However, as noted by the Chair, the issue of plastic pollution is inherently localized in nature and a global agreement cannot capture local specificities. Despite this, the Chair indicated that it was argued that a global agreement can accommodate diverse applications of countermeasures.

88. The Chair also referenced some specific interventions. Reference was made to the need to collaborate and to collect data jointly, consolidating the data in one place, and the need for sounder waste management at regional and national levels. The Chair also raised the differences between developed and developing countries, and the need for this to be taken into account.

89. One representative acknowledged, as was recognised in UNEA Resolution 2/11, that the plastic pollution crisis is inherently transboundary in nature and thus requires a concerted and coordinated global response to address it. The representative stated that a new global agreement should build upon, complement, and drive ambition within existing national, regional, and global legal and policy instruments. In addition, it should consider national contexts and challenges, and should not impede immediate action to address this issue. The representative added such a convention on plastic pollution must address the full life cycle of plastics. In this representative's view, monitoring and reporting, plastic pollution prevention, coordination, and financial and technical support are the core elements of a new global convention.

90. One representative highlighted the lack of a dedicated and coherent international regulatory framework on plastic pollution. The representative re-enforced, from the Third AHEG meeting in Bangkok, that there is a limit to how much can be achieved on the national level as plastic pollution is a transboundary issue. They added a stronger global response is needed, highlighting the shortfalls of previous voluntary initiatives including the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, and expressed their interest in exploring the option of a new legally binding commitment.

91. The representative highlighted possible elements of a new global governance architecture or agreement, which had been presented by their group, which included a shared vision, building on the zero-vision agreed in UNEA resolution 3/7; reduction targets; national action plans; monitoring and reporting; a scientific body; implementation support; and common rules and regulations. It also made suggestions for national or local response options, including regulatory and governance measures; operational measures, such as collection campaigns, improved waste management systems, and Encourage managers in the private sector to set up companies dedicated to the recycling and recovery of plastic products, and awareness-raising measures.

92. One representative asked governments to support youth-led groups by providing adequate information and training aimed at strengthening resilience and response among young people on environmental issues. They suggested the establishment of youth support programmes organized in

the framework of governments' engagement in regional organizations. The representative further recommended that alternative ways of preservation using biodegradable materials to package food should be adopted and implemented. They added that synergies between renewable energies and marine health should be taken into account when linking the agreements prepared in AHEG to broader environmental law.

93. The representative highlighted the need for action to gain a greater understanding of plastic pollution and its impacts. The representative indicated there is an urgent need to assess the feasibility of proposed interventions and measures. They emphasised the importance of prioritizing and fostering a better understanding of the extent and distribution of marine plastic litter and microplastics, and the importance of binding industry standards. They further suggested the need for a standardized monitoring framework for the analysis of mismanaged and abandoned plastic waste which could engage youth and local communities in mapping and tracking plastic debris whilst closing knowledge gaps, in particular through the inclusion of citizen science.

94. One representative expressed the importance of regional cooperation to tackle marine litter.

95. One representative indicated that agreement should take into account upstream and downstream action, national circumstances, resources and capabilities.

VII. Outline of a draft summary on identification of options in preparation for the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly.

96. The Chair stated the outcome of the AHEG, from the scenario note that was published on 2 September 2020, under section II: "The outcome of the AHEG is a short summary, for further consideration of UNEA-5 to be held 22-26 February 2021. In accordance with the mandate provided in paragraph 10 d) of UNEA resolution 3/7 and paragraph 7 of UNEA resolution 4/6, and based on inputs from experts throughout the AHEG process, the summary report is envisaged to include relevant information on..."

97. The Chair emphasised the official channel is the report of the Executive Director.

98. The Chair highlighted three cautionary points regarding the nature of the summary.

- I. First, it should not be subject to negotiation. It should be a summary. It will not contain any political judgement or endorsement of the specific direction. The context of the summary will be checked in the light of accuracy, consistency of mandate, etc.
- II. Second, completion of the AHEG mandate should come first. Making this kind of document is not the primary focus of this group. There should be no further discussion on the agenda items. That is for AHEG 4; keep your views till then.
- III. Thirdly, there will be equal treatment of all the agenda items. The summary will deal equally with each mandate given by resolutions.

99. The Chair presented the proposed outline:

- Section A: Introduction;
- Section B: A review of the present situation
Results of the stocktaking exercise and drawing up an inventory of technical and financial resources and mechanisms - may refer to four categories of actions. They received narrative submissions, which illustrate that many participants continue to update their actions, including with regard to waste management. For the inventory, they sorted by life-cycle stage, public/private, etc. The exercise identified the challenges and barriers, such as limited coordination of bilateral funding. Highlights need to increase private investment. Opportunities for innovative financing were mentioned
- Section C: Potential national, regional and international response options
They analysed the effectiveness of options. Key findings of the effectiveness analysis: eight overarching response options. They applied five indicators. Highlighted need for further elaboration. Some very important ongoing activities are not necessarily addressed in the working document. Should be captured in the Chair's summary
- Section D: Options for future and continued work at the global level
Noting they identified quite a lot of important options, which are not mutually exclusive or listed in order of priority: sharing a long-term vision, developing national action plans that

cover upstream to downstream, regional and international cooperation to facilitate national responses, further coordination of financial and technical assistance, technology transfer, capacity-building, having a scientific panel and/or a knowledge database, having multi-stakeholder engagement. To facilitate these actions, there were calls for a new global framework/agreement. There was a discussion about whether such an agreement should be legally binding or not. They had a diverse range of points made. There was a proposal to strengthen existing frameworks on the grounds that they are effective and that they can deal with the diverse circumstances of each region and nation.

100. One representative highlighted aspects in which they believed were necessary for achieving the mandate granted by UNEA Resolutions 3/7 and 4/6. The representative enforced that plastic is an urgent threat and that a new internationally legally binding instrument is needed and technically feasible. The representative recommended to include in the final report back to UNEA-5 that a new global instrument is widely supported, but this does not exclude the option of the strengthening of existing instruments, which should also be included in AHEG's final report.

101. One representative expressed support for the summarising of all AHEG's work. The representative suggested mentioning categorization in the summary, on the effectiveness analysis, the indicators (maturity, feasibility, time frame and impact) are appropriate. The representative also proposed recommending that, in working document 4/4, items on the content of activities addressing the plastic lifecycle ((b), (g) and (h)) and items related to frameworks ((a), (c) and (d)) should be differentiated. The representative added national action plans can allow the implementation of detailed countermeasures specific to a country's circumstances and can be developed and implemented relatively quickly, but there is the possibility of a gap among countries in the levels of countermeasures, highlighting that this disadvantage can be eliminated to some extent by the formulation of common guidelines.

102. The representative highlighted that an international binding framework can promote a uniform level of implementation among all countries, but binding targets need to be clarified and it does not allow for the implementation of countermeasures that take into account each country's circumstances.

103. The representative concluded the summary should be organised according to the specific characteristics of each response option, and the advantages and disadvantages related to each implementing country's circumstances should be included.

104. One representative expressed their expectation for the AHEG to summarize the response options submitted by Member States and reflect the convergence of expert opinion on further work. The representative added this should be annexed to the Executive Director's report for UNEA-5. The representative suggested that UNEA may establish ad-hoc groups such as AHEG to consider specific problems and make recommendations. UNEA resolutions 4/7 and 3/6 address different aspects of marine plastic litter and microplastics.

105. The representative recognised the programmed of work of AHEG and the need to identifying potential options for further work by UNEA. The representative added we must recognize that UNEA can establish subsidiary bodies to make recommendations for further work. They highlighted the outcome document needs to reflect government experts' recommendations on the response options that should be explored further.

106. The representative objected to the methodology followed in the analysis of a new international framework and suggested the indicators (feasibility, etc.) are not transferable. The representative emphasised the need to analyse and structure the information to highlight favourable options for future work, including a new global agreement which has gained growing support since UNEA-4.

107. The representative made suggestions towards point 4 on future work. They suggested to replace the term "feature" with "global function", which is more precise; include the strengthening of monitoring and reporting on national measures; and move the bullet point on the structuring of a new global instrument to a separate point.

108. One representative highlighted it is within the purview of AHEG to decide whether it wishes to make recommendations, which would be included as part of the Executive Director's report to UNEA-5.

109. One representative stated the AHEG short summary should provide a well-developed synthesis of the international response option, which was the subject to multiple submissions identifying

various elements and design approaches, as a top priority. The analysis of effectiveness should draw from the UNEP report titled "Combating Marine Plastic Litter and Microplastics: An Assessment of the Effectiveness of Relevant International, Regional and Subregional Governance Strategies and Approaches" and the multiple discussion papers prepared by UNEP.

110. The representative added that under section D of the proposed outline on options for future and continued work at the global level, in the light of the submissions, the listed features under the first bullet point should be expanded to include other features that have been identified for continued work, for example:

- the development of common definitions, methodologies and formats
- common monitoring and reporting obligations on the evolution of plastic pollution in the marine and other environments and national progress toward a circular economy for plastics
- agreed controls on the production and consumption of virgin plastic as well as policy regulation, technology transfer, capacity building, training and public/private partnerships including incentives for the private companies working on the recycling sector
- development of global product design standards and labels, including restrictions on polymers and chemicals
- establishment of scientific and technical bodies
- international protocols to remediate plastic pollution
- multilateral financial mechanism providing financial resources to developing countries and economies in transition to enable implementation and compliance, such as capacity-building and training, monitoring and reporting support, policy development and institutional strengthening
- mechanism for ensuring coordination with relevant regional and international conventions, instruments and organizations. It is important that the features listed here contain the elements of an international response option that are broadly identified in the submissions
- inclusion of mandatory extended producer responsibility schemes and take back schemes.

111. Lastly, under the last bullet point of section D, this representative noted that when identifying a vision for future work the modalities should include the convening of an intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop a legally binding global agreement on plastic pollution.

112. One representative emphasised that UNEA-5 will need to pronounce the delivery of AHEG's mandate and highlighted the focus now should be on assessing and compiling the written contributions submitted by Member States, Major Groups and other stakeholders as the basis for further work. The representative added, section B should cover UNEA resolution 4/6 paragraph 7 (d) on the analysis of 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 make to solving the global problem, with a view to demonstrating that no real reduction in marine plastic litter has so far been achieved.

113. The representative suggested in section C, the future scenario for the likely development of pressures on the marine environment should be added to the potential new national, regional and international response options. The analysis of the options, which is also mandated by UNEA 3/7 10 (d) (iv), should contain the geographical scale of the intervention and measurement of the effectiveness against specific targets that are to be achieved at the different stages of the life cycle of plastics.

114. The representative suggested section D should reflect the fact that a global agreement would not just accelerate action but also provide a legal framework for all actions and harmonize and strengthen existing efforts in order to close remaining gaps.

115. One representative suggested to raise the level of the discussion with regard to waste management instruments and market projections and expressed their interest for this to be included within the draft.

116. One representative suggested that the whole AHEG process is highlighted in the summary and that the summary recognises that resolution 4/6 builds on resolution 3/7. The representative emphasised that recommendations could not be negotiated in the meeting and that any language that might prejudice a particular policy outcome or response option could not be accepted. The representative recognised the opportunity for subgroups of UNEA to make recommendations.

117. One representative highlighted the task of identifying potential response options for continued work for consideration by UNEA. They also emphasised if there is to be a legally binding instrument it must be based on science, which is currently limited. The representative suggested that more science is needed for the consideration of a global agreement.

118. One representative raised recommendations to improve the clarity of the document and to accurately reflect the work of the group. The representative suggested Section C could benefit from greater detail and list the response options analysed along with whether the option is existing or potential. The representative added section D to reflect resolution 3/7 should remove the word 'future' from the title. In addition, the representative suggested it is important to keep taking note of recent scientific evidence moving forward, such as the recent report by the Pew Charitable Trusts and Systemiq, and proposed that the authors of this report and, as mentioned by others, the authors of the WWF business case report be invited to AHEG 4 to present on their findings.

119. One representative highlighted the difficulty in trying to establish classical reduction targets as we are lacking data and advocated for a scientific mechanism to be incorporated into a global agreement.

120. One representative noted the report should be factual and neutral, adding that the sub-bulleted list of features in section D should be framed as non-exhaustive, just in case not all points are captured therein.

VIII. Other matters.

121. The Chair reminded participants to register for AHEG 4 and to submit written documents prepared in advance. The deadline for registration is 2 November.

122. One representative from the Secretariat reminded participants that they are also requested to submit their nomination letters.

IX. Closure of the meeting

123. Following the customary exchange of courtesies, the chair declared the meeting closed.

ANNEX 1 - Presentation by the Secretariat on the response options archetypes

Response option archetype 1: strengthening of the current international framework (a potential response option that operates at the international level. This has the potential to address all life-cycle phases and target all environmental zones for protection. The strengthened framework could take effect within all terrestrial and maritime geographic ranges.

Scale rating: high, because it is adopted at the international level, although its success will be determined by how effectively strengthened measures are adopted in relevant international instruments. No overarching management target has been set beyond the UNEA Res 3/7 target of elimination of discharge to the oceans. Some operational targets have been set in existing multilateral agreements that could be applied to some life-cycle phases, particularly the end-of-life phase. Most are not quantitative beyond elimination and the targets do not cover all life-cycle phases.

Maturity rating: high, with a range of existing instruments being well established over a number of years and broad engagement in most current instruments already demonstrated.

Feasibility rating: medium, with land-based sources requiring greater attention. Negotiations could be lengthy and reporting across multiple instruments for all life cycle phases could be challenging.

Time-frame rating: long, as adoption of amendments and the implementation of agreements and other instruments may take more than five years. This assumes, for example, that proposals put forward may require two sessions for any amendments to be adopted. These are indicative time frames only.

Impact rating: high, as it would have global impact and could address gaps relating, for example, to microplastics and poorly governed life-cycle phases. This may require encouragement of upstream preventive measures, including product design standards. The effectiveness of the existing international framework is currently constrained by a lack of enforcement mechanisms, national bodies dedicated to the issue, funding limitations and poor technologies in some Member States. Strengthening the existing international framework will not necessarily address these barriers.

Response option archetype 2: development of global design standards (a potential response option that operates at the international level). Global design standards have the potential to address all life-cycle phases and target all environmental zones for protection. This response option could take effect in all terrestrial and maritime geographic ranges.

Scale: medium to high, as the standards would be designed to take effect at the international level in a voluntary framework, but their effectiveness would be determined by the ways in which they were adopted at the national level in both voluntary and mandatory measures. Overall management targets for global design standards could aim for an overall reduction in waste generated and reductions in contributions to climate change, but these have not yet been set for marine litter and microplastics. Some industry commitments may serve as operational targets, but these would need expanding.

Maturity: low, as this response option has not yet been well established.

Feasibility: medium, as, although not demonstrated for marine litter and microplastics, some level of confidence is provided by building on existing efforts to develop performance standards for plastics, including standards developed in forums addressing other environmental issues.

Time frame: medium to long, as high-level performance criteria could be developed in two to five years. More detailed or challenging design standards may take five or more years. If well-constructed, global design standards could address most pressures and barriers at a global scale, but to be effective, development of global design standards requires strong technical

engagement with multiple actors across the life cycle and strong governmental support to incentivize national integration of these standards

Response option archetype 3: a new international framework (a potential response option that operates at the international level) This has the potential to address all life cycle phases and target all environmental zones for protection. It could also take effect in all terrestrial and maritime geographic ranges.

Scale: high, as wide participation by Member States can be assumed. A potential new international framework could adopt the management target set by UNEA resolution 3/7 of elimination of discharge to the oceans. This could also be expanded to include issues of human health. Operational targets could be developed across life cycle and limited examples can be found in existing international instruments.

Maturity: low, as this response option is not yet well established.

Feasibility: medium, as this response option has not yet been demonstrated, but a level of confidence is provided by building on existing efforts in various forums and the measures and activities already under way in many Member States.

Time frame: medium to long, depending on the voluntary or binding nature of the framework. For example, a voluntary framework could be developed in two to five years. A binding framework might, for example, require a longer time frame of five years or more. Should political will be sufficiently high, this could be achieved in a shorter time frame, if for example, UNEA 5 were to establish a negotiating committee that could draft agreement text over the two years following UNEA 5. Once the text was adopted, entry into force would depend on the rate of deposit of instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession.

Impact: high, as the response option could address most pressures and barriers at the international level.

Response option archetype 4: strengthening the regional framework (a potential response option operating at the regional level). This could address all life-cycle phases, with a particular focus on strengthening upstream preventive measures. The environmental zones targeted for protection are marine areas and freshwater environments that lead to the oceans. The geographic range is predominantly the coastal zone and maritime areas within national jurisdiction, with urban areas targeted for waste management.

Scale: high, once all regions have adopted strengthened and harmonized measures, assuming non-coastal States have also been engaged. Some high-level qualitative management targets exist of a broader nature and some qualitative operational targets exist, but these are not specific to marine litter and microplastics.

Maturity: high, as a number of regional instruments exist that have been well established for many years, with broad participation for coastal States.

Feasibility: high, as this response option has been demonstrated through existing instruments and activities. A high level of implementation could be ensured by facilitation through regional nodes already in place, which could also be expanded.

Time frame: long, as binding instruments may take several years to be amended across all regions and instruments.

Impact: high, as guiding action at the regional level has proven successful in some regions. Nevertheless, most regional frameworks have not adopted a full life cycle perspective. Continued funding and capacity-building will also be important in making this response option effective.

Response option archetype 5: development and implementation of regional marine litter action plans (an existing response option operating at the regional level). The primary environmental zones

targeted for protection are the marine and freshwater environments leading to the oceans. The geographic range is predominantly the coastal zone and maritime areas within national jurisdiction, with urban areas targeted for waste management.

Scale: high, with nearly all 18 regional seas programmes having adopted regional marine litter action plans, or in the process of doing so. High-level management targets for the reduction of marine litter are limited. Many operational targets inferred, with some targets set for microplastics. Targets in recent regional marine litter action plans may be difficult to achieve, particularly where legislative changes are targeted at the national level. There is increased coverage of life-cycle phases, but this can be expanded.

Maturity: high, as a number of instruments have been well-established for many years, since 2008, with broad participation and some plans having been revised or are under review.

Feasibility: high, as this response option has been clearly demonstrated, although the strengthening of upstream preventive measures could be more challenging to facilitate.

Time frame: long, as many regional marine litter action plans have adopted a limited time frame, with specific timelines for different activities and projects. Other action plans have no specified end date or may refer to the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Impact: high, as they are an effective option for facilitating national action. With some additional focus, they can encourage actions that address most of the pressures and barriers identified across all phases of the life cycle. While these action plans operate at the regional scale, coverage will be nearly global once all regions have adopted action plans, but improved engagement with non-coastal States would strengthen global outcomes.

Response option archetype 6: national marine litter action plans (an existing response option that operates at the national level). These target mostly freshwater and marine environmental zones for protection and take effect in most geographic zones including the coastal zone, maritime areas within national jurisdiction, water catchments, freshwater rivers and lakes, the urban environment and waste-disposal sites.

Scale: small, due to limited adoption at the national level. Management targets for the overall reduction in marine litter are limited. Some operational targets are set for rates of recycling, reuse and recovery, single-use plastics, non-biodegradable bags and collection of derelict fishing gear.

Maturity: medium. Some plans have been in place for a number of years, with some subsequent reviews.

Feasibility: medium, as there are a number of national action plans for marine litter in place. Nevertheless, the number of national marine litter action plans is still limited, especially in the case of developing countries. Capacity-building, technology transfer and funding may be required.

Time frame: medium, as most action plans adopt a medium-term time frame (two to five years), with specific dates for the achievement of particular activities and projects and regular reviews.

Impact: high, as well-designed national marine litter action plans can address most pressures and barriers identified at the national level across all actors within the life cycle. They operate on national and subnational scales and Wider adoption by Member States could greatly increase their impact at the global level.

Response option archetype 7: strengthening of solid waste management services using regulatory and market-based instruments (an existing response option operating at the national level). This aims to prevent discharge of waste into the environment by improving recycling across all life-cycle phases, including through reduction and reuse. It predominantly targets land and freshwater environmental zones for protection, with all marine areas benefiting. The geographic range in which it takes effect is all terrestrial zones and the coastal zone.

Scale: small, but it could be expanded as more Member States develop integrated strategies. Some management targets are set for overall recycling rates or the phasing-out of specific product ranges. Some operational targets exist for specific product return, recycling, and refilling rates. Targets on the whole do not cover all life-cycle phases or a wide range of products and can be expanded to include rate of repair and reuse

Maturity: high, as this response option has been adopted across a range of products in many Member States.

Feasibility: medium, as it has been demonstrated through a number of national examples with regard to particular product ranges. Nevertheless, schemes for producer fees can take a long time to develop and require strong government enforcement. Infrastructure and legislation may need to be strengthened and strong stakeholder engagement is necessary, particularly in order to understand the impact on different sectors.

Time frame: medium to long, as some measures may require less time to implement, but the development of methods to determine full and real-time costs of end-of-life treatment may take longer to establish.

Impact: high. Well-designed regulatory and market-based instruments can be effective in overcoming pressures and barriers at the national level by engaging multiple actors across all life-cycle phases, thereby improving waste management services and preventing marine litter. Wider adoption by Member States would greatly increase the impact on a global scale.

Response option archetype 8: national strategy to prevent microplastics (a potential response option operating at the national level) This option aims to prevent and reduce to the minimum pollution by microplastics during all life cycle phases. The environmental zones currently targeted for protection by existing microplastics measures are the marine areas and freshwater environments that lead to the oceans, with emerging recognition of soil and air pollution. A comprehensive strategy could target all zones. The geographic range is predominantly land-based.

Scale: small, but it could increase to medium or high as more Member States adopt these strategies. No overall management targets have been set for microplastics in general, but some operational targets have been set for pellets and microbeads.

Maturity: low, as this response option has not been adopted as a holistic strategy, but there are examples of limited adoption of individual measures by Member States.

Feasibility: medium, as the option has been demonstrated through a limited number of national practices for particular sources of microplastics. To provide a holistic and full life-cycle approach addressing all sources, a number of additional measures are required, including the development of design standards, labelling and certification schemes and possibly amendment of environmental quality standards.

Time frame: medium to long. Some measures may require less time to implement, whereas others, such as development of standards and certification schemes, will take longer, particularly where product function could be affected.

Impact: high, as the adoption of national strategies to prevent pollution by microplastics can address most pressures and barriers identified across all actors within the life cycle. A microplastics strategy would operate at the national and subnational level, but wider adoption by Member States could greatly increase impact on a global scale.

Annex II - summary of the activities of the GRULAC regional consultation

Here's a summary of the activities of the GRULAC regional consultation, in which the UNEP Secretariat, GRULAC Member States and others participated. Several presentations were given from specialized agencies and Member States, including from Costa Rica and Antigua and Barbuda on potential response options to combat marine plastic litter. As far as the various initiatives are concerned, some practical measures were highlighted, such as extended producer responsibility, biodegradable plastics, taxation, using technological resources, and ways of calculating and quantifying the actual amount of marine plastic litter. We also considered the need to understand each country's situation and to apply measures locally.

Other measures were identified, such as at the consumer level. Systemic issues were noted, and thus there was a need to work with the private sector in order to find circular economy solutions. Participants discussed existing and potential response options at international, regional and national levels, as well as barriers and obstacles, including a lack of education about the environment, and a lack of governance and effective measures. Three pilot studies on managing marine plastic litter and regional plans on combating the issue were mentioned. Discussions also centred on the kinds of international plans that could be applied and on the need for a life cycle approach and international cooperation in terms of technical and financial support.

Participants spoke of other aspects, too, such as action plans that could help countries of the region to combat marine plastic litter and deal with residue in the oceans. Member States discussed approaches made through taxation and activities that were under way to clean up the coastline and oceans. The need for multi-stakeholder alliances was mentioned.

Regarding a possible new international agreement, many viewed this as an effective way to deal with the issue. While it was a longer term approach, it could be a powerful tool for dealing with the issue.

Annex III – Range of views expressed by Member States and Stakeholders on submitted response options. Presentation by the Secretariat

International response options

The range of views on a vision for combating marine litter and microplastics included the need to:

1. Eliminate all discharge of plastic into the ocean, directly or indirectly, based on the precautionary principle;
2. Include targeted action and commitments that are specific, measurable and time-bound;
3. Increase concerted global action by building on existing efforts;
4. Engage all stakeholders, with action should be multi-layered, evidence-based and addressing all stages of the life cycle of plastic, from sustainable production and consumption to environmentally sound waste and wastewater management (including waste collection).

The range of view on existing instruments included the need to:

1. Learn from the work of existing organizations, frameworks and initiatives;
2. Review, revise and build on relevant existing instruments, including regional and multilateral instruments and frameworks that have been adopted to address marine litter;
3. Engage existing mechanisms and programmes that encourage sustainable consumption and production;
4. Provide cohesion and context to the many existing initiatives while avoiding duplication of efforts and to fill identified gaps in a coordinated and structured manner;
5. Provide a framework for developing linkages with/complementing multilateral environmental agreements, while respecting their legal structures;
6. Consolidate knowledge and efforts by mapping existing committees/scientific platforms (to promote innovative technology, coordinate funding and harmonize reporting needs and data-collection methods).

The range of views on global standards and guidelines included the need to:

1. Develop common calculation methods, definitions, standards and regulations with particular attention to categories of plastic products that are most prone to leakage and that pose a particular risk to the environment, including single-use plastics, fishing gear and primary microplastics;
2. Develop definitions of unnecessary and avoidable use of plastic, including single-use plastic;
3. Develop/improve global guidelines, including for:
 - a. The management of polymers and additives;
 - b. The adoption of global labelling schemes, including common labelling;
 - c. The monitoring of the state of implementation;
4. Establish global standards for industry, including with regard to:
 - a. The use of extended producer responsibility schemes, customized on the basis of country conditions;
 - b. The use of a phased approach or the polluter pays principle;
 - c. The provision of information on the adverse impacts of products;
 - d. Waste management practices, including in the export and import of recycled waste;
 - e. Product design, durability, reparability and recyclability, including the need for multiple-use (as opposed to single-use) plastic;
5. Establish a global monitoring system that includes review and accountability and considers use of the precautionary principle, to enable a holistic land-to-sea approach;
6. Develop regulations on sustainable source materials, including:

7. Setting a minimum percentage of recycled plastic content in feedstocks;
8. Designating certain types of plastics as avoidable (including specific single-use plastics and intentionally added microplastics);
9. Common labelling applicable to all countries;
10. Common regulations on plastic sachet packaging;
11. The minimum recycled content;
12. Sustainability criteria for plastic products in domestic markets (both pre- and post-consumption) that are appropriate to, for example, national collection and recycling systems in order to ease the burden on domestic waste management regimes.

The range of views on the nature of a relevant instrument included the need to:

1. Establish a new global agreement with the continuation of already established frameworks and efforts at the global, regional, national and local levels. Attributes might include harmonized standards; sufficient flexibility to take into account national circumstances and region-specific challenges, including through national action plans with commitments to targets and measures best suited to each country's individual context; access to financial and technical support; mechanisms to measure progress in achieving not only the Sustainable Development Goals and other long-term goals;
2. Develop global architecture that includes existing and new voluntary and legally binding elements, using a multilayered governance approach. This approach could be extended to other institutions. Action could be taken using other response options;
3. Use existing mechanisms for international action to achieve a collective vision, with a new instrument considered where needed;
4. Employ a combination of response options to address marine litter at various levels (local, national, regional) based on a common vision of global action;
5. Ensure that each country identifies issues and tailors its actions on the basis of scientific knowledge;
6. Continue to use best practices in waste management with emphasis on regional/national/sub-national/local approaches that consider circumstances on the ground, rather than imposing international obligations.

The range of views on technological (technical responses) included the need to:

1. Establish mechanisms for financial and technical support for developing countries in meeting their commitments (e.g. capacity-building and technology transfer in various areas);
2. Establish a system to facilitate technical cooperation, transfer of expertise, exchange of technical know-how and technology and best practices, including:
 - a. Online training;
 - b. Face-to-face capacity-building seminars;
 - c. Partnerships to promote technical resource development;
3. Establish a strategic centralized platform for sharing information, knowledge and best practices;
4. Engage in sharing, guidance and collaboration in relation to research, innovation and scientific studies;
5. Facilitate the availability of needed financial and technical resources;
6. Identify innovative approaches to mobilize non-governmental resources and financing;
7. Implement and innovate regarding pathway and capture interventions including for wastewater treatment (removal).

The range of views on economic/financial responses included the need to:

1. Establish a new global funding mechanism: a robust long-term financial mechanism accessible to all parties and stakeholders; assist Member States with limited resources in implementing

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- their national obligations (e.g. the development of national action plans). This mechanism could include a balance between adaptation and mitigation (e.g. technological) measures;
2. Reduce the resource gap by ensuring that international aid flows are well coordinated. This could include:
 - a. An agreed list of priorities;
 - b. A set of evidence-based criteria for prioritizing funding;
 - c. Standardized reporting templates for deliverables and effectiveness evaluation;
 3. Increase markets for recycled plastics;
 4. Create an international financial mechanism for waste management and recovery;
 5. Establish a global fund to support efforts by countries. Access could be based on:
 - a. Common but differentiated responsibilities;
 - b. Consideration of national circumstances;
 - c. Extension to land-locked countries to prevent leakage from rivers and waterways into the oceans.

Proposed economic/financial response options relating to UNEA resolution 4/6 paragraph 7(b) included:

1. Increased coordination among donors at the global, regional and national level, especially bilateral donors;
2. Increased alignment of financing with the national priorities of recipient countries and better coordination and alignment of climate finance;
3. Support for countries in accessing multilateral/international funds;
4. Leveraging of public funding to create a pipeline of “bankable” projects for private investment (e.g. blended finance, making investments more attractive/less risky);
5. Addressing of the perverse incentives to use virgin plastic as a cheaper raw material than recycled plastic;
6. Making use of inclusive financing opportunities, including financing for community-based organizations and indigenous communities.
7. Increased financial resources to remove types of plastic pose the greatest risks, and to use circularity approaches for other types with an evidence-based approach;
8. Addressing the funding gaps in sectors, including textiles and agriculture.

The range of views on scientific, educational and informational responses included the need to:

1. Coordinate scientific research internationally, including socio-economic research and research on micro/nano plastics and sharing of scientific knowledge;
2. Increase collaboration and exchange among existing conventions, organizations and forums in order to address marine litter and microplastics in a coherent and complementary manner;
3. Establish a scientific and technical advisory group on marine litter and microplastics, which would benefit from the work of existing mechanisms;
4. Establish an intergovernmental scientific panel to enhance science-based decisions and policies, drawing on scientific research and knowledge from all relevant institutions.

Regarding the establishment of a global knowledge hub, it was proposed that such a hub could initiate activities and serve as a source of (and clearinghouse for) national source inventories and to support governments, organizations and private entities in addressing aspects of marine litter prevention and environmentally sound and risk-based recovery. Its work could include:

1. Development of harmonized monitoring methodologies;
2. Collection, collating and open sharing of global monitoring data and information from all actors and sources, including citizen science initiatives;
3. Access to robust, reliable science and sound scientific practices, such as those that address additives;

4. Development of guidelines for sampling and analysis of marine macro- and microplastics;
5. Identification of demonstration projects and their linkages with regional activities;
6. Mapping of actors, initiatives and approaches.

Regarding the establishment of a scientific and technical panel or body, it was proposed that such an entity could:

1. Assess and track the state of environment and the extent of the problem of marine line and microplastics and progress in meeting global goals and agreed international initiatives; collate state-of-the-art knowledge to provide scientific and/or technical advice/inputs for decision-making and implementation (science-policy interface); and share, guide and collaborate with regard to research, innovation and scientific studies;
2. Coordinate standardized monitoring and reporting with an emphasis on comparability, interoperability, measurement of global progress across the life cycle, including production, consumption, recyclability, recovery and leakage elimination;
3. Develop common rules and regulations including calculation methods, definitions and standards, convene existing scientific advisory initiatives and compile available scientific data, enhance scientific knowledge, transfer marine technology and promote innovative solutions to combat marine debris;
4. Ensure coordination and cooperation between various existing scientific platforms in order to harmonize reporting and data-collection methods and prevent duplication of efforts and divergences where possible;
5. Engage in innovative data collection through, for example, the use of new technologies such as earth observation and map the interrelation and linkages between different approaches and models.

The range of views on multi-stakeholder engagement, coordination and cooperation included the need to:

1. Streamline stakeholder initiatives and objectives in order to avoid duplication/fill gaps;
2. Recognize and build on the current work undertaken by the Global Partnership on Marine Litter to reduce marine plastic litter and give it further attention and strengthen it to improve its reach and effectiveness;
3. Take into account work and progress on various issues made by the Partnership for Plastic under the Basel Convention when discussing response option;
4. Harness initiatives undertaken by various other actors

The range of views on public-private partnerships included the need to:

1. Consider public-private partnerships as a mechanism that facilitates cooperation between governments and the private sector. All stakeholders should be informed and educated to change behaviours. Existing, enhanced, or new public private partnerships can promote targeted actions;
2. Remove barriers, such as investment and tax barriers for industry, to promote innovative solutions to material recovery and recycling;
3. Consider mandatory reporting/verification of companies' compliance with regulations or commitments, including those on ecolabelling.

Regional response options

The range of views on legal and policy responses included the need to:

1. Ensure that any new global framework is be flexible enough to take into account national circumstances as well as region-specific challenges;

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2. Take into account examples of existing regional frameworks, including the United Nations regional seas conventions, protocols, and action plans, including regional action plans on marine litter, fisheries bodies, water basin committees, the Group of 20/Group of 7, ASEAN/EAS;
 3. Consider ways to facilitate the development and support for regional/national action plans to combat marine debris and microplastic effectively, guided by a global framework;
 4. Ensure that the various regional programmes and the national interventions are aligned and build on each other. Regional governance/coordinating bodies should create synergy among themselves (strengthening communication/coordination, rationalizing plans to avoid duplications and address gaps, consolidation information and minimizing redundant reporting);
 5. Consider options, including existing forums, for collaboration tailored to spurring regional, national, subnational and local action and to include the participation of non-governmental actors;
 6. Harmonize international legal instruments and approaches;
 7. Standardize regional reporting on production, consumption and final treatment of plastics in order to address the whole life cycle. Relevant existing instruments should be reviewed, revised and built on.

The range of views on technological (technical) responses included the need to:

1. Establish regional projects such as the removal of fishing gear;
2. Establish regional sharing platforms on knowledge and best practices, as well as collaborative networks for research and strengthening of economic gains;
3. Map and monitor the flow and source of marine litter at regional level.

The range of views on economic/financial responses included the need to:

1. Establish regional funds and engage regional economic communities;
2. Mobilize regional development banks and other regional funding mechanisms;

The range of views on educational and informational responses included the need to:

1. Increase collaboration among Member States with regard to existing conventions, organizations and forums;
2. Map and monitor sources and flows of marine litter at regional level;
3. Galvanize action through existing instruments such as regional seas programmes, regional fisheries bodies and river basin committees;
4. Facilitate regional capacity-building and information exchange regarding, for example, best practices and best available techniques/technologies through regional centres or nodes of the Global Partnership for Marine Litter and promote a collaborative network for research and strengthening economic gains;
5. Engage in regional collaboration for the removal of abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear;
6. Strengthen the work of the regional seas conventions in monitoring and assessment by expanding their responsibility for managing global data on the basis of harmonized monitoring and assessment.

National response options

The range of views on legal and policy responses included the need to:

1. Develop national action plans and reduction targets, including:
 - a. Facilitating and strengthening capacities for the development and implementation of the plans;

- b. Setting goals and targets at the national level;
- c. Introducing voluntary national reduction target(s) or compulsory, measurable, time-bound targets. They could include national targets for waste avoidance, diversion and recovery;
- d. Preparing a set of guidelines for how to design and implement action plans;
- e. Developing best practices with associated policy toolkits that governments could use in designing and revising their national action plan;
- f. Developing national inventories, including in relation to:
 - i. Sources, pathways, and amounts of waste generated, reused, collected, recycled and properly disposed of;
 - ii. The volumes of marine litter cleaned up;
 - iii. The scale of use of innovative technologies and materials including research and development investment;
 - iv. The scale and/or effect of assistance to countries that need technical capacity development, including with regard to the increased amount of waste properly disposed of;
2. Set differentiated targets and related indicators for developed and developing countries;
3. Develop national policies and/or initiatives, including in the following areas:
 - a. Bans on microplastics in personal care and cosmetic products;
 - b. Encouragement and coordination of industry-led solutions and commitments;
 - c. Extended producer responsibility schemes at the national level with industry engagement;
 - d. Engagement with the private sector, including the informal waste sector, to collaborate on improved waste management by developing innovative new recycling and recovery technologies, funding models, and new value streams;
 - e. The creation of incentives to reduce demand/consumption for plastics and the introduction of taxes on waste disposal in the natural environment; the promotion of indigenous design using local materials; behavioural change across all sectors through formal/informal channels;
 - f. Encouragement for the transformation of business models in various areas; promotion of investment in waste treatment facilities and other infrastructure;
 - g. Strengthening of reception facilities in ports and involvement of fishermen;
 - h. Establishment of river basin committees, establishment of integrated waste management system to capture all used materials, including plastic packaging, and making access to such systems universal;
4. Develop/establish national positions across responsible forums as input to regional conventions, organizations and forums for a coherent national positions across the relevant ministries;
5. Ensure effectiveness and reporting, by:
 - a. Developing a methodology to assess the effectiveness of the policy measures taken;
 - b. Standardizing national reporting on production, consumption and final treatment of plastics, addressing the whole life cycle;
 - c. Including marine-litter-related aspects in national coastal plans;
 - d. Establishing national agencies dedicated to coastal management.

The range of views on technological responses included the need to:

1. Promote environmentally sound waste management (e.g. of dumpsites), improved waste management systems (e.g. upstream sorting, recycling and recovery) and environmentally sound clean-up of marine plastic litter; and deploy innovative mitigation measures such as litter booms, wastewater treatment, drain traps;
2. Consider recycling rates for plastics, with a particular focus on the quality of recycled material and the existence of markets for that material; develop infrastructure, incentivize and develop markets for scrap material to improve sustainable production, use and recovery into increasingly circular systems; and conduct life-cycle assessments of alternatives.

The range of views on economic/financial responses included the need to:

1. Increase funding and improve outcomes by financing all phases of integrated waste management systems; and enable innovative, transparent funding approaches;
2. Incentivize entrepreneurial waste pickers;
3. Transferring some of the cost of implementation to the actors responsible for leakage, for instance through restrictions on the sale of non-recyclable material, product design requirements, deposit schemes or other extended producer responsibility measures and operationalization of polluter pays principle.