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9 November 2020

MR. JORGE LAGUNA-CELIS

Secretary of Governing Bodies
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Dear **Mr. Laguna-Celis**:

We are pleased to transmit herewith the Philippine submission for the 4th Meeting of the UNEA - Ad Hoc Open-Ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics (AHEG-4).

We reiterate our written submission to the AHEG Secretariat under UNEA Resolution 3/7 paragraph 10, including our presentation at the Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation during the Inter-Sessional Period. We take note of AHEG's significant progress in understanding the state of knowledge, assessing gaps especially in the current legal framework, and in identifying a range of responses at various levels.

As we conclude this 4th meeting of AHEG later this week, we are optimistic that we will accomplish our mandate pursuant to UNEA Resolution 3/7 and 4/6 and guided by existing UNEA Rules of Procedure.

Thank you and warm regards.

Very truly yours,


ATTY. JONAS R. LEONES

Undersecretary
Policy, Planning and International Affairs



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**PHILIPPINE SUBMISSION
TO THE 4TH MEETING OF THE UNEA - AD HOC OPEN-ENDED EXPERT GROUP
ON MARINE LITTER AND MICROPLASTICS**

November 9, 2020

We thank this Ad Hoc Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics, including the past and acting Chairperson, the Secretariat and consultants, and the important work accomplished for the past years!

Since the UN Environment Assembly first resolved to assess and address this growing crisis,¹ we have progressed significantly in understanding the state of knowledge, assessing gaps especially in the current legal frameworks that are fragmented and ineffective, looking for technical and financial resources and identifying a range of responses at various levels. As we conclude this fourth meeting of AHEG later this week, we would have completed our mandate pursuant to UNEA Resolution 3/7 and 4/6 and guided by existing UNEA Rules of Procedure. Even as this international problem continues with plastic production increasing and plastic waste in the ocean similarly increasing.

Thus, as provided in our mandate and in keeping with our obligation to the Member States, we, as the AHEG now need to provide clear recommendations and concrete actions for the consideration of the Member States at Fifth UN Environment Assembly on how to move forward with further work, to match the scale of this transboundary global and cross-sectoral problem.

As an archipelagic country located at the tip of the Coral Triangle, the Philippines continues to espouse the commencement of a negotiation for such a treaty, whose key elements we have already started to identify these past years, as commonly proposed by many of the member states in their submissions and in our discussions at AHEG.

We reiterate our written submission to the AHEG Secretariat under UNEA Resolution 3/7 paragraph 10, including our presentation at the Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation during the Inter-Sessional Period, wherein the proposed global response through a binding legal agreement was also supported by many countries in the region, including the unanimous support from the Pacific Island Countries.

As government experts, together with experts from the private sector and civil society, we have examined technical and governance-related questions. We have seen that current international frameworks to address this global problem are fragmented and ineffective, and existing responses are insufficient, including existing voluntary international frameworks (even while we can build on them in considering our further work).

¹ UNEA Resolution 1/6, June 2014; UNEA Resolution 2/11, May 2016; UNEA Resolution 3/7, December 2017; and UNEA Resolution 4/6, March 2019.

A new global agreement to prevent and eliminate marine litter and microplastics that will accelerate national and regional measures is needed. Various components of this global legal framework have been commonly identified and recommended by majority of the experts from Member States, including those from the Philippines. These includes the following, among others:

- a. setting a vision and objective towards long-term elimination of plastics from nature.
- b. covering the life cycle of plastics including source materials, sustainable production and consumption (and not just focus on downstream activities like waste management);
- c. developing a legal framework for effective national, regional, global action;
- d. harmonizing reporting and monitoring to track global progress through comparable, inter-operable indicators;
- e. mechanisms for capacity-building and technical and financial assistance, by way of implementation support especially for developing countries; and
- f. establish a science-policy interface in the long term, i.e. a scientific panel to guide policy actions.

These global elements can fit in and can be contained in a new binding global agreement. This will complement and will be reinforcing the recommended responses at the national level such as the development and implementation of a national action plan, and regional level, enhancement, and integration with regional seas programmes, among others. We appreciate the zero draft of the Chairperson's Summary containing the substantial findings of past meetings and its elaboration on developing national plans of action, regional actions, and voluntary frameworks.

We thus respectfully suggest that the high level of support by a large majority of government experts around this global legal framework and its elements, as mentioned above, should be accordingly highlighted as a principal global response option moving forward. Such convergence around this new binding global agreement and its elements should be exactly and clearly reflected in the AHEG-4 Meeting Outcome and the Chairperson's Summary of the work of AHEG.

Finally, the Philippines stresses that as an international community of government experts in this AHEG, assisted by the Secretariat, consultants and the multi-stakeholder groups, it is our task, in accordance with our mandate and in keeping with the rules of the UNEA, to ensure that we inform the Member States of not only the past work that we have done but also furnish them clear and concrete recommendations on how to proceed by establishing a vision for further work of the UN Environment Assembly.

We, as the AHEG, need to translate this growing support for this needed global response into action and recommend a mandate to begin the negotiations, using the key elements proposed as a starting point, to be adopted at the Fifth UN Environment Assembly.

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