

WWF Statement Agenda Item 4

Ad Hoc Open Ended Expert Group Final Meeting, November 2020

- Thank you Mr Chair, and thank you to the secretariat and consultants for their presentation and work on this report. My name is Michael Alexander and I'm speaking on behalf of WWF.
- On the effectiveness analysis, we firstly want to reiterate a concern previously raised by a number of member states, that it does not assess to what degree the response options contribute to actually eliminating discharge into the ocean.
- Secondly, the assessment of "maturity" of response options should be considered in the context of the drastically increasing rate at which plastic pollution is affecting our oceans and life on earth, which we heard all about yesterday.
- In this sense, the high "maturity" of existing instruments could be understood to mean that they've simply been operating with insufficient force to tackle the growing plastic pollution crisis. Therefore, "maturity" has not solved the problem. What we should be looking for, instead, should be novel and pioneering ideas (like a global treaty).
- Another point made by delegations is that plastic pollution is a complex issue, and that it is important to consider timing and feasibility. The negotiation of a new legally binding instrument can indeed take time. But not all treaties take a long time to negotiate. The international community has shown that it can react swiftly and with determination to global environmental challenges. The development of the Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol in the 1980s is but one example.
- Now, we have the opportunity to spearhead a unified global effort to solve one of the most pressing issues of our time, the plastic pollution crisis, or we could waste another UNEA cycle debating over semantics while the crisis reaches a point of no return. I believe the choice is clear.
- As with most other international environment issues, a legal framework can serve as a platform to gradually strengthen the international response over time. In short, the complexity and scale of this issue should serve to highlight its urgency, rather than to temper our ambition.
- If we are sincere about wanting to tackle this problem, we cannot allow the least interested among us to dictate the speed and resolve of our response. We have now heard from many governments around the common elements of a global treaty that can be part of the recommendations of this AHEG. We ask the AHEG to draw from this report as we move forward with a concrete recommendation of a global treaty for UNEA-5.
- Thank you.