

**Oral Statement delivered under Item 4.a.
November 10th 2020**

Item 4: Consideration of paragraph 7 of UNEA resolution 4/6

a. Taking stock of existing activities

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Thank you Chair,

Every Statement counts!

On behalf of the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL), a member of the Break Free From Plastic movement, we would like to comment on the report [UNEP/AHEG/4/INF/6](#) summary stocktake of existing activities, which is complemented by the working document [UNEP/AHEG/4/2](#).

A clear takeaway from this stock taking exercise is that current commitments don't come anywhere near solving the problem; new holistic measures are undoubtedly required to address the enormity of the plastic pollution crisis.

According to the [2020 Global Biodiversity Outlook](#), *"the rate at which plastic pollution enters aquatic ecosystems is projected to increase by 2.6 times the level of 2016 by 2040, under a 'business as usual' scenario. **Even if current commitments to reduce plastic pollution were implemented in full, the reduction in pollution rates would only fall by 6.6% below these levels**".¹*

A second key takeaway is that *"actions reported tended to focus at the end of the plastic lifecycle and fewer actions that targeted 'turning off the tap' by targeting the flow of plastic at its source, the design, production, manufacture and raw material phases. (Par. 41 and 50, [UNEP/AHEG/4/INF/6](#)).*

We did not observe in this stocktake measures to reduce toxic additives and other harms to human and ecosystem health as a result of plastic production, use, or waste processing.

Also, "fewer actions were reported in the medical, automotive, construction, textiles and electrical industries compared to the agriculture, aquaculture fishing industries. Actions are frequent in the packaging, food beverages, and retail sectors."

The limited actions reported in the agricultural, textile and automotive sector is a bad sign. Plastics used in both agriculture and textiles are a significant source of microplastics in both water and soil, and the use of plastics in such applications is also planned to grow considerably in the coming years. Synthetic textiles are the largest known source of marine microplastics, according to [peer-reviewed studies](#). The automotive industry, a significant climate polluter in other ways, is also now using more plastic in the name of "reducing the level of carbon footprints", essentially substituting one type of climate pollution for another, considering the climate impacts of plastic production, use, and waste processing.

¹ The GBO report quoted: Lau, W. W. Y., Shiran, Y., Bailey, R. M., Cook, E., et al (2020). Evaluating scenarios toward zero plastic pollution. Science, eaba9475. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aba9475>

Our conclusion is that the combination of activities reported and continued aggravation of the situation indicate the need for a change of scale and approach to meet the current dynamic and urgency of the problem. A global agreement is more relevant than ever to ensure that actions meet global objectives, such as the already agreed objective of *“long-term elimination of the discharge of litter and microplastics into the ocean”*

