

## **Norway**

### **General statement**

*This statement has only been delivered in writing*

Thank you Chair,

First of all, let me thank the UNEP Secretariat, the AHEG Bureau and the Chair for your steadfast efforts in planning and organizing this virtual meeting. Congratulations on your election as Chair of the AHEG!

Plastics are integrated in all areas of our daily lives. While plastics will continue to bring various societal benefits, a systematic and comprehensive global approach is needed to mitigate the severe impacts of plastic pollution on our oceans and the environment. .

In 2017, an assessment of the effectiveness of relevant international governance strategies and approaches was presented to UNEA-3 that highlighted key gaps in international governance. At UNEA-4 we made progress, but we would have liked to see a more decisive step towards a stronger global commitment.

The report points out that the absence of an institution with a mandate to coordinate existing efforts, lack of legally binding instruments in key regions to manage marine plastic pollution originating from land, and limited industry due diligence and lack of global design standards to mitigate plastic pollution hamper effective international management of plastics. These shortcomings necessitate a global response that address the entire life cycle of plastic pollution.

A business-as-usual approach that does not address current governance gaps is harmful to ecosystems and the services they provide, as well as harmful to human well-being and economic productivity in multiple sectors.

Since Norway tabled the first resolution already at UNEA-1 in 2014, we have made significant progress in deepening our understanding of the challenge of marine plastic litter and microplastics, both with respect to its sources, pathways and impacts on the environment and the need to improve how this area is governed.

We have taken measures to improve existing instruments such as the Basel Convention to better control the global trade in plastic waste and also taken action to strengthen regional and national measures to stop plastic pollution. But the sum of these will not suffice in itself, as our response remains hugely fragmented. Today, there is no multilateral agreement that addresses the issue of plastic pollution in a comprehensive manner, from both land and sea-based sources and that can catalyze ambitious national action towards a common global goal.

As global plastic production and thus plastic waste generation is estimated to grow significantly in the coming year, the problem is unlikely to disappear. We need to get smarter about the way we produce, use and dispose of our plastic products.

Mr. Chair,

The UNEA process has established a common understanding of the seriousness of the problem and the need for stronger action globally. We must act now and get in place stronger mechanisms for global actions. We all share the urgency to get in place effective solutions that will stop plastic litter entering our oceans.

Supported by the other Nordic countries, Norway has put forward a suggestions to facilitate the discussions of an effective global response, through the Nordic Report on possible approaches of a new global agreement. In October, we also learnt about the call by 30 large multinational companies for a new global treaty on plastic pollution recognizing that a coordinated international response that aligns business and government behind a shared understanding of the causes and responses to prevent plastic pollution is needed.

By the end of next week, the Expert Group will have met four times and seek completion of its mandate specified in resolution 3/7 and 4/6 and guided by the Rules of Procedure for UNEA.

The first three meetings of this expert group showed that there is an increasingly mature discussion and common understanding that a new global agreement is one option for further work to be considered by UNEA.

Based on the written submissions and statements in the AHEG-meetings, there is clear convergence among a majority in the group on the need for a new global agreement to deliver several key global functions. These key global functions are:

#### **1. A shared global goal**

Many of the submissions point to the need for a common long-term vision and objective. As of now, the UNEA-3 zero vision to eliminate all discharge of plastic litter into the ocean is one such global goal. The Osaka Blue Vision put a date to end this by 2050. The SDG target 14.1 have committed us to significantly reduce discharge of marine litter by 2025. The Ocean Plastic Charter have targets and measures with the due date of 2030 and 2040. A new global agreement would need an ambitious goal that we all can work towards.

#### **2. A common approach to national action plans covering the life-cycle of plastics**

Many have advocated for ambitious action to be implemented at the national level. The Nordic Report submitted to the AHEG suggests that National Plastics Management Plans could form the core commitment of a new global agreement. The report also includes a toolbox for how such plans could be designed to be effective. Guided by the global goal, countries could develop National Plastics Management Plans that allows for flexibility in choosing targets and measures that fit their specific circumstances. Having such a commitment in an agreement would bring political ownership, ensure regularity in revision and reporting at a national level.

Additionally, we see support for these key functions:

**3. A mechanism to harmonize reporting and monitoring** of actions and effects of measures.

**4. A financial mechanism** to deliver technical support and capacity building.

**5. A science and knowledge mechanism** that will enable a long-term multi-disciplinary scientific effort to provide access to quality assured information for stakeholders at all levels.

Mr Chair,

As acknowledged by the UNEP Secretariat and the Chair in the Second Virtual Preparatory meeting, UNEA establishes subsidiary bodies, such as Ad Hoc Open-Ended Expert Groups, to consider specific problems and to make recommendations as per Rule 63, para 1 while the UNEA resolutions 3/7 and 4/6 outlines mandated tasks regarding the problem of marine plastic litter & microplastics.

Recalling the mandate from UNEA resolution 3/7 OP 7 (d) (v), the programme of work of AHEG includes a task to identify potential options for continued work by the United Nations Environment Assembly, we believe that it is crucial that the AHEG provides a proposal that can guide UNEA in future decision-making.

Norway therefore, supports clear recommendations to UNEA-5 on the path to develop a global agreement that can effectively prevent plastic pollution in a comprehensive manner for the long-term. One such recommendation would be that UNEA-5 decides to establish an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee with the aim to get in place a new global agreement.

Norway believes that it is crucial that the AHEG delivers a concrete proposal that can guide further action to be taken by UNEA. Today, we have long-standing frameworks in place to address global environmental challenges such as climate change, the loss of biodiversity, hazardous chemicals and waste. Now is the time to show the global community that we are serious about our willingness to institute a permanent response to prevent marine plastic pollution.

We look forward to a week of engaging and fruitful deliberations on these global response options

We thank you, Mr. Chair