

Meeting of the Bureau of the *ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics* (AHEG) on Wednesday 22 July 2020

Comments by the EU and its Member States on the Draft Scenario Note “Planning for the AHEG and path forward to UNEA-5” dated 15th July 2020

- The EU and its Member States welcome the continued efforts by the Bureau and the UNEP Secretariat to ensure continuation of the AHEG’s work throughout the intersessional period and amidst these still difficult circumstances. We like to send our best wishes to Jillian Dempster to fully recover and our thanks to Satoru Iino to the support in this regard.
- The EU and its Member States appreciate and take note of more clarity provided with regard to the content of the outcome document to be forwarded to UNEA5. As regards the last indent of paragraph 8 of the Scenario note, it is our understanding that this part of the outcome document would not only refer to the study on effectiveness from UNEA Res 4/6, but also to the substance of submission on response options made by submitters pursuant to UNEA Res 3/7 and earlier conclusions, especially that keeping status-quo can be ruled out as a response option. Pending further information on the outcomes of the study on effectiveness and on what elements, we consider it important that the views expressed by submitters be also captured by this part of the outcome document and previous steps in the workflow, e.g. input to working groups, and compilation of this document.
- With regard to preliminary identified elements for the discussions in the working groups (1: waste management and responsible production; 2: monitoring and review and science-based actions; and 3: financial and technical resources and capacity-building), we are concerned that they currently do not sufficiently reflect the life-cycle approach to combatting marine litter and microplastics that was identified by many as the relevant approach with emphasis on prevention. Dedicated element/working group on sustainable production and consumption should be envisaged (instead of vague reference to responsible production only) to reflect this approach. In the alternative, the waste management element should be broadened to reflect life-cycle of a product from the very beginning and also include responsible sourcing of raw material and design issues, in addition to later steps like production, distribution, consumption, end-of-life and waste management.
- These three elements are the central topics the work of the working groups should focus on and should provide a sub-structure for the overarching theme of a range of response options to be identified in accordance with paragraph 8 c. In addition it needs to be clarified how the two working strands due to timezone constraints will be merged into a common understanding or converging views before the currently last AHEG. To this end, keeping in mind the limited room for discussion for all participants, an additional plenary format before AHEG (preferably in beginning of October) could be helpful. Similar applies to the very much welcomed opportunity of regional consultations and how the result may feed in the debate.
- In addition we would appreciate more information on how the ongoing work on studies by the consultants should inform these discussions.
- EU and its Member states, being on the one hand aware of the still challenging situation due Covid-19 and travel restrictions but on the other hand richer in experience that virtual meeting can only partially substitute physical meetings, would prefer to still keep the opportunity for an in-person meeting open until September, when the roadmap is going to be

revised and finalized. To alleviate burden for those closely involved in the organisation considering UNEP facilities in Nairobi as an alternative venue might be an option as well as planning a hybrid approach, allowing core attendance as well as online participation. The EU and its Member States like to emphasize that the central point of the process is not only formally to deliver upon the mandate of AHEG issued by UNEA Res. 3/7 and prolonged and extended by UNEA Res. 4/6, but also according to the intent to establish such an expert group as laid down in UNEA RoP 63 (1) to give specific recommendations to UNEA.