

UNEP Ad Hoc Open Ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics

IUCN Intervention: International Union for Conservation of Nature | Date: Wednesday, 30 May 2018

Plenary Session: Item 5: National, regional, and international response options, including action and innovative approaches

Thank you, and good afternoon to the co-chairs, your excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

In his opening remarks, Erik Solheim the UNEP Executive Director noted that there has been global progress in addressing marine litter, but that there is need to keep up the momentum in the run up to UNEA-4 in 2019.

The sentiments shared by various delegates and country representatives since the start of the meeting have stressed that this meeting needs to completely move beyond the status quo. We therefore encourage *a multi-layered governance approach*, noting that this includes *a review and revision of existing framework to address marine plastic litter and microplastics, with addition of components to address industry*.

Across the globe, many actors, including governments, civil society organizations and local communities have initiated concrete action, highlighting their level of concern for the marine environment, biodiversity and human health. We take note of recent policy and legislative responses by countries such as Kenya, and the EU whose member states have taken bold steps to tackle the global plastics pollution problem.

We concur with Eric that **change can and needs to happen faster**. We reiterate the need to rid the world of products that we can live and do without. Before the 1950s, society thrived well without plastic straws, plastic bags and micro beads in cosmetics, **why not now?** Significant measures can be pursued now without further delay through appropriate global and regional cooperation in formulation of appropriate legal and policy options.

All is not gloom. In response to barriers identified yesterday, we note that while global action is paramount, we could start to address some of those barriers immediately through regional and national action in collaboration with governments, regional bodies, civil society and local communities. We cannot afford to defer action until a time when we have all the pre-requisite knowledge and understanding. Organizations, including UNEP, IUCN and others have contributed to strengthening our knowledge and scientific foundations to facilitate action. Recently, an IUCN study provided better insights in our understanding of primary microplastics in the oceans. We observed that the growing presence of microplastics in the oceans requires new thinking about how to mitigate both primary and secondary releases across the supply chain.

I am also delighted to mention that IUCN has initiated a new *Marine Plastics and Coastal Communities initiative (MARPLASTICCS)* with the kind support of the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida). We are working closely with governments and regional bodies in Thailand, Viet Nam, Kenya, Mozambique and South Africa to gather knowledge and better assess the state and impact of plastic pollution. The work includes facilitating national action plans to control plastic pollution, supporting national and regional frameworks as well as legislative reform processes to reduce marine plastic pollution, and reaching out to business actors to help them better understand their plastics footprint, which requires metrics and indicators that do not exist. To address this gap, we are working with footprint and life cycle analysis experts and businesses to develop a plastics footprint calculator to help businesses close the plastic loop by consolidating data, quantifying scales of plastic flows, and developing solutions to guide decision-making.

We support the establishment of multi-stakeholder dialogue processes to explore how we can close the plastic tap, without forgetting primary microplastics which often get lost in global deliberations on plastic pollution.

We concur with the various speakers who have underscored the need to explore and develop innovative life cycle management approaches and call for a paradigm shift: from today's linear take-make-dispose model, to a more circular plastic economy.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.