

## BELGIUM intervention – agenda item 5

First Belgium would like to thank UNEP for organizing this important meeting.

For several years Belgium has a strong reputation when it comes to waste management: due to the combination of an extensive national regulatory framework with ambitious recycling targets, Belgium is one of the international frontrunners when it comes to the management of domestic as well as industrial waste.

Also on marine litter Belgium has adopted concrete targets, both on the national and subnational level: the Flemish government has committed itself formally on the target that by 2025 the leakage of waste from the Flemish region to the marine environment is to be reduced with 75%.

In order to reach that target, the Flemish minister of environment has adopted an action plan on marine litter. This action plan has been developed in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, such as national and local authorities, ports and waterways, scientists and the industry. The plan addresses all sources of marine litter, and contains concrete goals and measures aiming to prevent the leakage of all types of solid waste to the marine environment.

Some of the key measures in the action plan are:

- the provision of adequate port reception facilities for waste from ships, including fishing vessels and recreational craft;
- assess the possibility to apply market-based measures such as EPR for fishing gear;
- increase public awareness on marine litter;
- explore the possibility to establish a bilateral partnership with another country for a concrete cooperation on marine litter; and
- facilitating the transition towards a more resource efficient economy, especially for plastics. In that respect the two key elements are waste prevention, and bringing waste back into the materials chain. But the greatest challenge is redesigning our system of production and consumption.

I also would like to emphasize that for Belgium biodegradable plastics is not the way forward. Focus should be on better design for better recycling.

Monitoring marine litter on our beaches and at sea has been done for several years, on national and regional level, and it is clear what the problem is. We have sufficient information already, so the lack of internationally standardized scientific data should not be an excuse for not taking measures.

Regarding the international response options as mentioned in the UNEP discussion paper, Belgium is convinced that the “status quo” is not an option.

Existing international agreements can be explored in order to better address marine litter. In this regard we look forward to the developments under the Basel Convention. But still, we think there is a clear need for a better coordination of instruments, measures and targets at the global level.

