

Intervention by Finland under agenda item 5 on national, regional and international response options

Thank you Madam co-chair.

Coming from a country of thousands of lakes I would like to highlight that the litter problem, particularly microplastics, indeed is not restricted to the marine environment alone. We are able to detect microplastics even in some of our most pristine lakes.

The EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Waste laws and the EU plastics Strategy, as well as the regional sea convention for the Baltic Sea, HELCOM, provide us the frame within which we work on marine litter. HELCOM agreed on a marine litter action plan in 2015.

In order to improve the status of our marine waters we implement a national marine strategy. It encompasses monitoring, assessment and actions on marine litter.

I would like to highlight the importance of waste water treatment as a way to limit inputs of microplastics to the sea. In recent studies, we have found out that high level of waste water treatment goes hand in hand with a high level of removal of microplastics from waste water. In my capital Helsinki, only 1 % of microplastics entering the treatment plant goes through the plant and to the sea. The remaining 99 % is retained at the plant.

As part of our national marine strategy, we recently launched an innovation challenge for marine litter. We received nearly one hundred proposals ranging from mobile phone applications for detecting microplastics in products to technical solutions for filtering run-off water. The winner is still to be decided.

My minister has commissioned a national roadmap for plastics to be developed. It is drafted by a working group with a wide stakeholder involvement. It is planned to contain actions and it should be ready in September.

Globally the problem of marine litter is unresolved and taken that nearly two thirds of world's marine area is at the high seas beyond national jurisdiction, we think that a global response is necessary.

For this purpose, we consider that we should focus our discussions in this group particularly on the issue of governance.

Like many others, we also have a view that a status quo is not an option.

Existing governance instruments and activities are an important starting point. We for example value highly the work carried out in regional seas conventions and the Arctic Council. Further, Basel Convention is clearly an important instrument. However, there are also gaps and weaknesses in the existing instruments and activities.

We need a holistic global response to marine litter and plastics. Hence, I can say that we are interested in exploring the possibility for a new multilayered global architecture specifically dedicated to dealing with marine litter and microplastics. It ought to build on the objective provided by SDG target 14.1. It's development should use the existing instruments as a starting point. And lastly, it should have flexibility to take into account the differences in marine litter sources and necessary responses at national levels in different countries and geographical settings.