

Ad Hoc Open Ended Expert Group on Marine Litter & Microplastics

Agenda Item 5

Thank you madam co-chair and good day to all.

Like other delegations who spoken, we would also like to thank the Secretariat for preparing the discussion paper on national, regional, and international response options.

We would like to offer some comments on the selection of national options for implementation. We believe that any consideration of potential options must be based on a thorough assessment of the status quo, and must be informed by sound scientific analysis. As such Madame Co-chair, we would like to inform the meeting that in 2016-2017, South Africa conducted a “plastic material flows and end of life” study to assess the current status with regard to the production and management of plastics as a whole, and to look at where the specific challenges lie, in terms of plastic losses to the environment. That study, has laid the foundation for us to address various aspects of plastics management in the country, as it identified the barriers to improving the diversion of plastics from landfill sites, and to significantly improve recycling rates within the country.

One of the results called for under the study, was for South Africa to review our national policy and management framework for single use plastic bags. The study, which will be concluded in April 2019, will look at various options to improve the management of single use bags, including a potential ban. So to emphasize Madame Chair, we believe that a key to successfully identifying and pursuing various options, is to thoroughly assess the status quo.

Madame Co-chair, South Africa has taken the position that whilst we pursue a review and seek improvements to our waste management policy frameworks as a medium to long term intervention, our immediate short term priority should be to recover litter along our coast and in communities situated along our river systems, where solid waste management is inadequate and where litter has a strong tendency to enter our freshwater systems and eventually flow into the marine environment.

We have observed that areas further upstream from our coastal areas are significant contributors of marine litter, and hence it is our goal to initiate a source to sea initiative, as called for under the UNEA 3 resolution on marine litter and microplastics. The problem will be tackled in close cooperation with our private sector & civil society, and since poverty alleviation is a national priority for South Africa, we will seek to maximize opportunities for job creation and women and youth empowerment, through litter collection, waste sorting at community level and waste recycling. We hope that this initiative will serve as our primary contribution to the UNEP Clean Seas Campaign. With respect to microplastics, Madame Chair, South Africa’s cosmetics, in consultation with government, has committed to a voluntary phasing out of microbeads in cosmetic products. Overall, we are seeing a positive coming together of civil

society, the private sector, academia and government to step up our action against marine litter & microplastics.

In closing Madame co-chair, with respect to the Clean Seas Campaign and the # Beat Plastic Pollution Campaign, we are delighted to inform the meeting that, as part of world environment week celebrations, South Africa intends to run a television campaign using 3 of our major public television channels to draw attention to the problem of pollution in general, and to highlight the challenge of plastics and marine litter specifically. The campaign, which will be led by our National Minister of Environmental Affairs, will also seek to stimulate the recycling economy by imparting the message that waste is a resource. We hope that the campaign will make a further contribution in terms of drawing our public's attention to the problem.

Thank you...