

**Comments by the European Union and its Member States**

**on the Revised intersessional roadmap of the Ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics of 17 June 2020**

- The EU and its Member States welcome the efforts by the Bureau and the UNEP Secretariat to ensure continuation of the AHEG's work throughout the intersessional period and amidst these difficult circumstances.
- The EU and its Member States also appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on the Roadmap. We take note of the relatively dense planning of different webinars throughout June and July. Even though in July the EU will already be in the midst of the summer holiday season, the EU and its Member States consider it important that there is no further delay in the work of the AHEG, especially on the studies, since these studies will be informing experts' discussions on the response options. Given that recordings of these webinars will be available on the AHEG website, the EU and its Member States may send comments after the summer holiday season, if considered necessary.
- However, with regard to the effectiveness study, the EU and its Member States consider it necessary to emphasise once again that for the study to inform discussions, it should conclude with a comparative analysis of the effectiveness of the existing response options as well as of how effective the potential response options could be at the global, national, regional and local level in preventing the discharge of marine litter and microplastics into the environment.
- Furthermore, the proactive approach by the Bureau during intersessional period is especially relevant in the light of the EU and Member States' position that the AHEG should complete its work and that its mandate should not be extended beyond UNEA5.
- In that context, and bearing in mind the continuing uncertainties around physical meeting taking place before UNEA5, it will be important that the remaining steps and deadlines necessary for the completion of the AHEG's work are already now included in the Roadmap.
- This means that the Roadmap should foresee opportunities for interactive and conclusive discussions on response options as well as the different steps needed for a timely finalisation of the outcome document to be forwarded to UNEA5 for consideration and a possible decision addressing plastic pollution. In order to make best possible use of the virtual setting and ensure progress in discussions, the EU and its Member States strongly encourage breaking the response options discussions into

several dedicated sessions, each focusing on commonly identified elements in the response options submitted by the experts. Since many of them, if not all, build on the plastics' life-cycle, organising substantive discussions dedicated to different stages of the life cycle could be one approach.

- With regard to discussions on response options, the EU and its Member States particularly welcomed the idea of the Chair's non-paper on the response options from the earlier version of the Roadmap. This Chair's non-paper could in particular serve as a basis for dedicated discussion sessions. We regret to see it missing from the latest version and would encourage its re-introduction in the overall planning. In order to move forward with the discussions, an in-depth analysis of response options, of their substantive elements and possible areas of convergence that would contribute to the discussions is very much encouraged.
  - The currently available draft summary outline is useful but has several limitations. A number of points from the submission do not come out clearly enough, or with the necessary nuance; or are taken out of the overall context presented in the submission. Not to mention that certain elements of the submissions were incorrectly transposed. In the case of ours, it is incorrectly stated that we do not foresee a strengthening of scientific and technological knowledge. Our submission also does not refer to the legal nature of the global agreement. The EU and its Member States are concerned that the crucial limitation of such overview will not facilitate progress in the discussions on response options.
  - As for the outcome document, the EU and its Member States would first like to recall that the AHEG should deliver on the mandate given to it by both UNEA Resolutions, 3/7 and 4/6, and request that this be corrected in the introductory part of the Roadmap. Furthermore, the EU and its Member States would encourage timely consideration by the Bureau and the UNEP Secretariat on how to approach the development and finalisation of the outcome document, recalling the disappointing and difficult experience from AHEG2 when the outcomes of substantial discussions failed to reach UNEA4. The EU and its Member States call upon the Bureau and the UNEP Secretariat to take all necessary steps to prevent this from happening again. The EU and its Member States will continue reflecting on the preferred format of such document. In any case, such outcome document will need to go beyond procedural aspects of the AHEG's work and contain a dedicated part on identified response options.
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