

PLANNING FOR THE AHEG AND PATH FORWARD TO UNEA-5
Canada's Comments on the AHEG Scenario Note (version dated July 15, 2020)

Canada would once again like to express our appreciation to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Secretariat for providing Ad Hoc Open-Ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics (AHEG) participants with the opportunity to share feedback and inform the revised AHEG Intersessional Roadmap (Roadmap), as well as now the draft Scenario Note.

Overall, we continue to be encouraged by the ongoing efforts of the UNEP Secretariat and the AHEG Bureau towards finding innovative solutions that can help progress the work of AHEG intersessionally in light of the ongoing global health pandemic.

While Canada is pleased that the Scenario Note provides broader information regarding the path towards the fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-5), there are a number of newly proposed dimensions to the intersessional process that require further clarity.

Specifically, the Scenario Note should describe in greater detail the differences between the various meeting formats being proposed (i.e. the interactive technical briefings; virtual working groups; regional consultations; preparatory technical meeting; informal online exchange space; etc.), including, *inter alia*, their respective purposes/functions, structures, topics/areas of focus, planned supporting materials, and intended outcomes. This could be done, for example, in a brief comparison table at the outset of the document. It is important that references to the above formats, as well as any proposed outcomes, are consistent throughout the Scenario Note.

Taking note of the revised Roadmap schedule, we welcome the adoption of a more targeted and streamlined approach to the number and frequency of intersessional activities. Canada would strongly suggest that a similar approach be considered in regards to the various papers referenced throughout the Scenario Note. Recognizing the time constraints currently being faced in order for AHEG to fulfill its mandate by UNEA-5, any additional work being proposed during the intersessional period should support opportunities for meaningful and informed discussions amongst AHEG participants, while avoiding inadvertently inundating the process.

In keeping with previous comments on the Roadmap (version dated June 17, 2020), it will be critical to provide AHEG participants ample time to review materials and provide feedback in order for the time available to be used as efficiently and constructively as possible. As such, we wish to put forward the suggestion that AHEG participants be provided:

- Relevant supporting papers and/or background documentation at least one (1) week prior to when they will be discussed;
- The paper elaborating on key elements and approaches at least two (2) weeks prior to its first discussion on September 03, 2020 (or revised date pending further revisions);
- The proposed summary report outcome document at least three (3) weeks prior to its first discussion on September 30, 2020 (or revised date pending further revisions); and,
- At least three (3) weeks to provide comments/feedback on materials following their respective discussion(s).

We would propose, using the suggested timelines above, that exact dates be explicitly identified within the Roadmap, including for when AHEG participants can expect to receive the various proposed supporting papers, background documents, elements and/or approaches papers, among other relevant materials, as well as when they are expected to provide feedback.

In addition, it is proposed that the Roadmap be extended to include, at a minimum, notional deadlines beyond September 30, 2020 for the various AHEG intersessional activities and any future discussions. This will be particularly important for the proposed outcome summary report, and consideration should be given to providing AHEG participants with an outline of the report for feedback before it is developed, as well as indicating the process for reviewing and discussing iterations of the report, with all of these dates also being reflected in the Roadmap.

Canada would also like to take this opportunity to stress the importance of ensuring the final agreed-upon intersessional process, and the way forward to UNEA-5, remains consistent with the mandate of AHEG pursuant to UNEA Resolutions 3/7 and 4/6.

We would therefore note that the analysis and examination of feasibility and effectiveness must capture all response options, and not be limited to only those selected for pilot studies, as well as that all response options, not only potential response options, must be included as part of the continued work for consideration by UNEA-5. These references should be updated accordingly when describing the proposed summary report outcome of the AHEG at the outset of the Scenario Note.

Canada supports the approach to have themed-based virtual working groups, and to address these themes in the proposed Secretariat report. We suggest, however, that additional clarity/specificity for the proposed themes be provided, as follows:

- **Waste management** – should cover collection, recycling and disposal of waste derived from land and sea-based activities (i.e. fishing and shipping waste) as well as address wastewater management;
- **Responsible production** – should cover the sustainable design, production and after-use markets of plastic products;
- **Monitoring and review** – should address relevant environmental and economic research gaps, as well as innovation (e.g. research and development in technologies or approaches);
- **Science-based actions** – should address sustainable consumption and both land and sea-based sources of marine litter; and,
- **Financial and technical resources and capacity building** – should consider available and required resources from all sources and at all spatial scales, global, regional and national.

Lastly, the UNEP Secretariat and/or the AHEG Bureau should consider how to clearly address the following outstanding questions when revising the Scenario Note:

- How will the proposed summary report be structured so as to ensure fair and equal consideration is given to both discussions from previous AHEG meetings, the various proposed intersessional activities, as well as other discussions prior to UNEA-5?
- Will an update be provided on complementary work outside of the AHEG, specifically pertaining to the Scientific Advisory Committee and the Multi-Stakeholder Platform, during the intersessional period?

- How will separately organized meetings with limited participation, such as the virtual working groups inform broader discussions amongst all AHEG participants?
- Does having the only interactive technical briefing on response options take place on July 29, 2020, more than two (2) weeks prior to the submissions on response options deadline of August 15, 2020, not pose a potential risk of limiting the opportunities for discussion of the response options that have not yet been raised?
- Will there be sufficient time to conclude the work of AHEG in advance of UNEA-5, by the end of November as per standards, if the only formal AHEG meeting is scheduled to occur on November 09-13, 2020?