

## Submission from the Major Group for Children and Youth to UNEP toward

### *Preparatory Meeting of the 4th Meeting of the Ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics*

#### - Intervention for Agenda Item 5 -

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Honourable chair, distinguished delegates,

Thank you for the possibility to speak on behalf of the Major Group of Children and Youth. We are members of the Microplastic and Marine Litter Working Group at MGCY and we are very pleased and glad to participate in this preparation meeting.

Thanks to the work we are fostering inside our Working Group, we are engaging youths, for example, we most recently organized a capacity building webinar to advance knowledge on practices to curb marine littering and enhance the role of youth in inspiring pro-environmental behaviours and responsible practices.

In 2020, 79% of plastic waste is sent to landfills or the ocean, while only 9% is recycled. Standing to an estimate of national geographics there are 5.25 trillion pieces of plastic debris in the ocean. More than 1 million seabirds and 100,000 marine animals die from plastic pollution every year.

We thank the secretariat for its work on the analysis of the effectiveness of response options and activities. We find it very comprehensive and we welcome the time and effort spent. We especially welcome the work presented yesterday on the indicators around feasibility and scope.

We would like to draw attention to the importance of the following points:

- a) There is a need for a clearer differentiation in the document based on high-impact avoidance mechanisms and lower impact measures.
- b) We emphasize that "avoidance" should be the first priority for plastic packaging as it is the polymer application with the least recyclability. This approach will decrease health effects especially when it comes to food packaging and save resources. We would like to see those aspects reflected more prominently.
- c) We would like to see more emphasis on education at all levels, including those that are more vulnerable to the risks of plastic pollution. The share of the population under the age of 30 is



increasing, making environmental education more relevant than ever. In addition, youth have the responsibility to educate and bring positive change to older generations.

- d) Recyclability of high-quality polymers is only possible if the exact material properties are communicated. We suggest legislation that requires the material composition information to be shared by the manufacturers.
- e) We strongly think that youths have an important role in this common effort. Engaging youths, listening to their point of view, pro-actively engaging them into the decision and policy-making stages on ML & MP are ALL actions that we strongly want to be pursued, in order to take strategic action toward UNEA-5.
- f) We would like the role of youth in marine litter prevention to be reflected more prominently. Furthermore, youths are both audience and actors when it comes to the important topic of education and community awareness on plastic and microplastic waste. Each day all around the world youth activists are committed to activism, advocacy, research in order to raise the ambition and create momentum on the fight against plastic pollution.

Thank you for your time.

- Intervention for Agenda Item 6 -

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Honourable Chair, distinguished delegates

My name is Teresa Oberhauser and I am speaking on behalf of the Major Group of Children and Youth.

We welcome the stage of the work and preparations for UNEA5 and the great research conducted. We thank colleagues from the secretariat for taking the time to engage in capacity building with us.

Children and Youth organisations are already today very involved in environmental protection activities that involve cleaning waterways of plastic and supporting recycling activities and awareness campaigns on the local level. As part of youth engagement on environmental issues, we ask governments to support youth-led groups by providing adequate information and training aimed at strengthening resilience and response among young people.

We suggest the establishment of such youth support programmes organised in the frameworks of governments engagement in regional organisations. The African Regional Meeting in August has shown us the great potential for awareness-raising and youth mobilisation support.

We also recommend that; alternative ways of preservation by way of using degradable materials to package food should be adopted and implemented.

Crude oil exploration has contributed to the high rate of marine pollution thereby hindering the achievement of the SDGs and access to clean water. We suggest taking the synergies between renewable energies and marine health into account when linking the agreements prepared in AHEG to broader environmental law.

We would like to draw attention to the importance of the following points and urge action towards a better understanding of plastic pollution and its impacts:

- 1) There is an urgent need to assess the feasibility of proposed interventions and measures, in order to engage in tangible solutions.
- 2) In order to do so, it is important to prioritize and foster a better understanding of the extent and distribution of ML&MP. To this end, we emphasize the role of quantitative modelling to quantify plastic pollution in our seas.
- 3) We emphasize the importance of binding industry standards. According to Deloitte, 65% of companies procurement leaders have no or limited amount of insights in their products' materials. This information should be mandatory for the protection of unknown material leakage. Producer responsibility should be enhanced further.
- 4) we suggest a standardized monitoring framework for the analysis of mismanaged and abandoned plastics waste. It is in this perspective that we advocate the role of youth and local communities in mapping and tracking plastic debris on beaches and at sea. In particular, the inclusion of citizen science could bring consumers even closer to the issues of plastic pollution and prove beneficial on several fronts. For instance, studies have found that the inclusion of citizens in data collection has reduced their littering behaviours, inspired positive change, and informed decisions about disposal. In addition, the engagement of consumers can overcome some of the gaps derived from the existing lack of data on plastic pollution.

*- submitted on behalf of the constituency by -*

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Youth for Environment



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**Children and Youth**  
the space for children and youth in the United Nations