

- The EU and its MS have long been promoting protection of marine environments and transition to a circular economy. This is also expressed through our strong commitment to address the challenges related to marine plastic pollution throughout the plastics life-cycle.
- The EU and MS would like to reiterate the importance of prevention of marine litter by addressing the whole life-cycle of plastics and discussing potential solutions across the sectors concerned. A transition to sustainable consumption and production patterns, sustainable management of chemicals and waste, efficient waste water treatment, addressing the seabased-sources of litter including microplastics, as well as cleaning up and monitoring the quantities of plastic litter in the sea all have their role to play, and this balance should be prominent in the work of the expert group, which should serve as a forum for bringing the different streams of work together.
- The EU and its MS would like to recall that the issue of marine litter and microplastics has been on the UNEA's agenda since the very first UNEA in 2014. The urgency to take concrete action has been stressed in all the subsequent marine litter resolutions and this expert group has been set up already in 2017. Let us also not forget the commitment to a pollution-free planet that we took at UNEA3, as well as UNEA resolutions on sustainable consumption and production and single-use plastics. 2
- Significant progress was made at the international level: amendment of the annexes to the Basel Convention to address the issue of transboundary movement of plastic waste, the IMO Action plan for marine litter from ships, and the marine litter action plans under the regional seas conventions. Also, the impacts of plastic pollution on aquatic species is raised as an emerging issue under various biodiversity and nature conservation related frameworks, such as the Convention of Migratory

Species. We need to use this momentum for addressing further gaps on the global level which have not yet been addressed.

- With this in mind, we need to take into account what were the concrete outputs of this group so far and what it should do under the extended mandate to bring us towards an ambitious outcome with concrete solutions to the global issue at UNEA5. This is without prejudice to the multi-stakeholder platform still to be established under Resolution 4/6. It will be important for this expert group to have clarity on how its work will relate to the platform, while noting that further fragmentation and duplication of work should be avoided.

- Building on the discussions in UNEA so far and previous work of the expert group, as well as work to be done under its current mandate, the EU and its MS are confident that there will be sufficient basis for this group to make recommendations on options that have the capacity to solve the problem at the global level.

- It is of outmost importance for the EU and its MS that this group delivers concrete recommendations to UNEA5 according to the mandate from UNEA Resolution 3/7, and by extension from UNEA Resolution 4/6. If the AHOEEG does not manage to deliver this prior to UNEA5, there is a risk of yielding yet another resolution stressing the urgency to act, the need for more analysis and data, and establishing yet another coordination mechanism giving us a false sense of achievement. Moreover, such inconclusive outcome bears the risk of undermining the trust placed upon this group to fulfil its mandate.

- The EU and its MS are ready to make use of the existing mandate to the extent possible and actively contribute to the discussions with a view of identifying concrete and effective solutions aimed at the long-term elimination of plastic pollution from land and sea based sources.
- The EU and its MS also believe that the work of this group should address global governance challenges in relation to plastic pollution, and identify areas where action at international level would have most impact, while taking into account and building on the initiatives undertaken at national and regional levels. It is our expectation that this group will, during its mandate, have an opportunity to discuss in detail all the relevant options, including assessing a potential global agreement that would address the whole lifecycle of plastics.
- The EU and its MS are therefore looking forward to the discussions ahead, especially in the smaller breakout sessions, where we expect clear guidance on the objectives and expected outcomes from these groups.