

Norway

General statement

Thank you, madame chair,

First of all, let me thank the government of Thailand for hosting this meeting, and congratulate our chair for your appointment. We have confidence in you.

Madame chair,

We are facing a serious, and truly global problem. Plastic wastes and microplastics threaten the health of our oceans, the marine food chains, and possibly human health. No part of the globe is spared, plastics and microplastics are found in the most remote areas such as in the Arctic, and in all types of marine species.

We have become dependent on plastics in almost all aspects of our daily lives. Norway does not believe that a "plastic free world" is possible (or desirable). But our current consumption and production patterns are clearly not sustainable. We need to significantly reduce plastic pollution to avoid serious environmental consequences. The challenge is complex. Some products have short life with the consumer, but a long life in the ocean. Waste management systems are lacking, or cannot deal with the increasing amounts of plastics. The economy of plastics does not incentivize minimization of waste, or recycling. These challenges are very much shared, in our globalized economy. That is why we must find solutions together. Solutions must also be sustained over time. We will not be done any time soon. We need long-term solutions.

Since 2014, the UN Environment Assembly has adopted a number of resolutions on the issue, expressing increasing degree of concern. The UNEA process has established a common understanding of the seriousness of the problem and the need for stronger action globally.

The first two meetings of this expert group also produced an increasingly mature discussion and common understanding. Elements of common ground started to emerge. We need to pick up on this positive note where we left last year and continue from there. But this time,

we must focus even harder on delivering on the core mandate of the expert group, which is to provide advice to the next UNEA in 2021. It is our vision that this expert group prepares the ground for a substantial and ambitious resolution at UNEA-5 that clearly brings us a big step forward.

On our agenda this week are the new asks for mapping and analysis added to the mandate at UNEA-4. We find it important that these topics are not developed and discussed without context and purpose. In our view, we should treat them as building blocks for a stronger international response to the problem. Take for example, the stock-taking. We need to take stock of progress at a regular basis in the future, and should design a stocktaking mechanism to last. The assessment of effectiveness of possible response options should enable us to measure whether we are making progress towards the global goals we have set – the SDG 14.1 target, and the UNEA-3 decision to ultimately eliminate all discharge of plastic litter into the ocean. To achieve this, we also need a strong scientific and knowledge base, as well as financial and technical arrangements that may support national efforts.

Madame chair,

This expert group is the only place in the UN system where marine litter and microplastics is discussed in a comprehensive manner, covering all sources and aspects. So - this group has a great responsibility - to bring forward to UNEA-5 substantial recommendations and options for lasting and strong international responses to our global problem.

Thank you.