

General Statement

Thank you, Chair, for this opportunity to make a statement on behalf of members of the Break Free from Plastics movement, representing more than 1,500 NGOs worldwide, with 16 organisations represented at this meeting.

As we enter discussions this week, it's important for us to collectively keep in mind that during the five days of this meeting, an estimated 4.4 million tonnes of plastics will be produced. Approximately 164,000 tonnes of this will be emitted into the marine environment.

And this is just the tip of the iceberg.

Downstream waste management efforts are overwhelmed with current production and cannot possibly address growing volumes. This will only get worse as production continues to increase, severely harming human health and the environment and fostering a global marine plastic pollution crisis.

The effects of plastics along the life cycle are inherently transboundary: plastics themselves travel across national boundaries while being produced, consumed, recycled, and wasted, and the toxic chemicals, greenhouse gases, and pellets emitted during production and disposal also cause harm across borders.

A report prepared by UNEP for previous meetings of this Expert Group has already concluded the following key points, which we recommend stay front and centre in our minds during the discussions that will take place this week and beyond:

- The most effective long-term solutions lie in “improved governance at all levels” with an emphasis on upstream prevention and reduction;
- The focus must be on systems change to create a circular economy away from single-use, driving behaviour change toward sustainable production and use;
- Improved climate-friendly and toxic-free waste management is needed urgently, but is not a comprehensive long-term solution; and
- Strengthening existing mechanisms is important, but several gaps would still remain in the governance of the full life cycle of plastics.

We ask our colleagues here to consider the magnitude of what we are facing and call on this community to urgently undertake leadership and action to solve this crisis.