

First session of Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment

New Zealand statements and interventions under agenda item 4

New Zealand general statement relating to the development of the instrument

(Please check against delivery)

Plastic pollution is a pervasive and growing problem. It is present in our soils, water, food and even the air we breathe. It is not confined by national borders. Plastic is blown across our landscapes, carried down our rivers, and as we know too well in the Pacific, gathers in our ocean.

Plastic pollution is a global challenge that requires action at all levels, including global action.

New Zealand welcomed the decision to begin this process, and we welcome the opportunity to meet here today.

We have set ourselves the ambitious goal of concluding these negotiations by 2024. To meet our deadline we must work fast. But we must not compromise our ambition. For this reason, New Zealand is pleased to join other countries in the High Ambition Coalition to End Plastic Pollution.

New Zealand supports an instrument that will reduce plastic waste and eliminate plastic pollution on a global scale, covering the full lifespan of plastics from extraction and production to disposal.

Achieving this goal will require a focus on circular economy and waste hierarchy principles. It will require innovation; redesign to avoid unnecessary use of plastics; and enabling plastic reuse and repair.

All actions must follow a low emission approach, and recognise the impacts of plastic pollution on human and ecosystem health.

New Zealand also believes that we must consider the issues caused by plastics at the start of their lifespan.

Over 99% of plastic is made from chemicals sourced from fossil fuels, and the fossil fuel and plastic industries are deeply connected.

Each year governments spend an estimated US\$500 billion of public money to subsidise fossil fuels. These subsidies artificially lower the cost of production and consumption, resulting in low prices of virgin plastic and many plastic products, which do not reflect true environmental costs.

Plastic pollution impacts us in many forms. In the Pacific region we see it in bottles on our beaches, micro-plastics in our fish, and perhaps most visibly in the so-called Great Pacific Garbage patch.

The impacts of plastic pollution faced by our friends and neighbours across the Pacific, and by other small island developing states, should be recognised and accounted for as we pursue our negotiations.

We must acknowledge the importance to indigenous peoples of reducing plastic waste and eliminating plastic pollution, and facilitate indigenous perspectives into our discussions. We must also recognise the role that traditional knowledge plays in the sustainable management and protection of the environment.

The challenge before us is great. And time is short. But New Zealand enters this process ready to engage constructively, and to ensure we meet this collective challenge with a collective response.

Thank you.

New Zealand intervention on scope, objective(s) and options for the structure of the instrument

(Please check against delivery)

New Zealand supports an instrument with obligations and control measures that are focused on the waste hierarchy and circular economy, promoting economic activity that restores and regenerates natural systems, by:

- designing out plastic waste and pollution,
- keeping plastic products and materials in use for as long as possible, and
- re-generating natural systems.

New Zealand believes that the objective of the instrument should reflect an ambition to eliminate plastic pollution, including by reducing plastic waste overall. We also wish to see objectives that recognise the need to reduce the impact of plastic pollution on human and ecosystem health.

Regarding scope, New Zealand considers the instrument should be broad and comprehensive in scope taking into account the lifespan of plastics from production and extraction to disposal, and addressing both land-based and marine plastic pollution. The scope of the instrument should also include primary and secondary microplastics, and nanoplastics.

Finally, plastic should be regarded both as a material, including chemicals and additives that make up different polymers, as well as plastic products or products made predominantly of plastic. We would support this distinction being explicit in considering the scope of the instrument.

Regarding, structure, New Zealand supports an instrument structure that will deliver the best possible outcomes. As mentioned by others in the plenary, at this stage of discussions, it is too early to know what structure would be most suited but our initial preference is to see core obligations and control measures in one single and inseparable document.

Thank you Chair.

New Zealand intervention on potential elements: (a) Core obligations, control measures and voluntary approaches as well as national action plans

(Please check against delivery)

New Zealand believes that core obligations, control measures and voluntary approaches focused on upstream measures will have the greatest impact. This means we should always consider where reduction, reuse and redesign are possible solutions, and consider how to enable those. In particular, this will require innovation, redesign of products, services and systems, the elimination of unnecessary use of plastics, enabling reuse and repair, and taking a reformed approach to environmentally harmful subsidies.

New Zealand also supports the removal of hazardous chemicals used in plastics that pose risks to human and environmental health. We agree with and support others on the point that labelling requirements for products will help to improve transparency and traceability throughout the supply chain.

It is important to have measures that ensure the environmentally sound management of all plastic-containing waste, including all types of microplastics, while enhancing waste management infrastructure, recyclability and a circular value chain for plastic.

New Zealand supports a combination of core obligations, control measures and voluntary approaches. Specifically we see a need for the use of global rules and targets, while ensuring flexibility to support implementation at a national level.

Finally, New Zealand considers it is essential for the instrument to contain measures that will facilitate indigenous perspectives given the importance of eliminating plastic pollution to indigenous peoples, and the important role that traditional knowledge plays in the sustainable management and protection of the environment.

New Zealand intervention on potential elements: (e) Stakeholder participation and action

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New Zealand recognises the importance of the engagement of stakeholders and indigenous peoples in the development and implementation of this instrument, and we support multiple mechanisms for doing so.

We are supportive of intersessional stakeholder engagement, which would give us sufficient time to consider and be informed by inputs, building on previous and existing stakeholder engagement.

We would like to underscore the importance of eliminating plastic pollution to indigenous peoples, and the importance that traditional knowledge plays in the sustainable management and protection of the environment. For this reason, we would like to see the effective participation of indigenous peoples in the development of the instrument and we would like to see provisions in the instrument that would facilitate indigenous perspectives.