

Japan Statement 29 May 2023
under agenda item 4

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

Chair, Ambassador Meza-Cuadra, distinguished delegates and stakeholders,

Japan expresses its sincere gratitude to the government of France for kindly hosting the second session of INC here in Paris.

Japan supports the statements made by the Asia Pacific Group, and HAC.

The adverse impact of plastic pollution to the environment and ecosystem and risks to human health and wellbeing must be addressed urgently. All delegations share an immense responsibility here in INC2 to advance our negotiations effectively and expeditiously and to show to the international community a clear path to resolve this issue.

With the involvement of all stakeholders, including local governments and industries, we need to establish a framework that promotes effective and progressive actions all over the world.

Japan has steadfastly committed to this negotiation for ending plastic pollution. We would like to share with all of you that at the G7 summit in Hiroshima, G7 leaders shared a commitment to end plastic pollution, with the ambition to reduce additional plastic pollution to zero by 2040. The Japanese delegation is willing to make important contributions to the negotiation based on that commitment.

Japan appreciates the preparation work for INC2 by the secretariat. The document on potential options for elements, in particular, provides us a good basis for discussions on the substance of the instrument.

This week, Japan would like to contribute mainly by proposing to add several elements which are critical for an effective instrument. They were in our submission.

First, the instrument must include both objectives and a common goal. We feel that the term “End plastic pollution” expresses a strong determination that we all must share, but because of its ambiguity, it is necessary to set a clear common goal with a timeframe under the objective of the instrument. Therefore, Japan proposes to have a common goal inserted after the objectives along the line of “with the ambition to reduce additional plastic pollution to zero by 2040”, considering that the Osaka Blue Ocean Vision that set a 2050 timeline has been shared by 87 countries and regions, and more recently, the G7 members shared a renewed ambition for 2040.

Second, the instrument must have mechanisms to prevent the release of plastic pollution into the environment, by keeping plastics within a circular loop. From this perspective, as core obligations, the instrument must develop an appropriate mechanism in the whole society to promote a circular economy for plastics, control plastic leakage into the environment, and to take necessary measures such as reduce, reuse, recycle and renewable measures, covering every stage of the plastic lifecycle. Elements on recycling deserve more attention in the instrument. Section B of the paper focuses mostly on production and waste management sectors. The Section should equally address efforts at the other stages of distribution, sales, and consumption. Raising awareness is also critical to bring about change in people’s behavior. Member states must consider all of these aspects and include their effective measures for plastic circularity in their National Action Plans that covers every stage of the plastic lifecycle.

Third, the instrument must have provisions on National Action Plans and National Reporting mechanisms as core obligations. These should require respective countries to plan concrete roadmaps and targets as well as collect and present clear data and evidence. By doing so, we can ensure that every country’s progress in their actions is monitored in a transparent and comparable manner.

We kindly ask for our full statement to be made available on the UNEP website. It includes an attachment on several core elements, which deserve to be considered among the options contained in the Options Paper. These elements are mainly from our latest submission.

Japan remains committed to completing the final text of the instrument by the end of 2024. Japan strongly hopes that by the end of this week, we will be ready to request the Chair and the secretariat to prepare a zero draft text of the instrument so that intensive discussions on the text can begin at INC3.

Thank you.

Additional options for elements for consideration at INC-2

This paper presents additional options for elements towards an international legally binding instrument, which were mostly included in Japan's submission but not reflected in the Option Paper. While Japan does not intend to negotiate the texts in Option Paper itself in detail, we believe that these options for elements are essential to developing an effective international legally binding instrument and should be considered in the INC discussions.

1. Objectives and Goal

(1) Objectives

The following elements should be included in Objectives:

- Prevention of potential risks to human health (we should note that it requires careful consideration based on the future progress of scientific knowledge and evidence)
- Adverse effects could extend to the marine and other environments, ecosystem and biodiversity

The importance of those factors are reaffirmed in the UNEA resolution 5/14.

(2) Goal

Setting a common goal to reduce additional plastic pollution should also be included as an element.

Elements that should be considered in discussions as found in Japan's submission

II. A. Objectives and goal

The committee may wish to consider using the following statements of objective of the instrument:

(d) End plastic pollution with the ambition to reduce additional plastic pollution to zero by 2040; prevent its related risks to human health and adverse effects on human well-being and the marine and other environment throughout the life cycle of plastic to avoid detriment from plastic pollution to ecosystem and biodiversity.

2. Core obligations, control measures and voluntary approaches

The current Option Paper covers limited stages of the plastic lifecycle - production and waste management and disposal. Other stages of its lifecycle - sales, distribution, and consumption - should also be included in order to realize a full-lifecycle approach.

We emphasize upon the importance of including overarching obligations to establish

an appropriate mechanism in the whole society to promote plastic circular economy and to take necessary measures to promote plastic circularity covering every state of plastic lifecycle. Such options is not included in the current Option Paper.

Also, promotion of recycling should be more included as an element in the Option Paper because it is necessary as a solution. Even substitute materials also produce wastes after use, potentially leading to additional pollution, if they are not handled properly.

In addition, the effective measures at every stage of plastic lifecycle must be clarified, for example, in an Annex of the Convention as concrete measures of core obligations. This helps the Member States to make sure that necessary measures are properly reflected in their NAPs and to consider adding other promising measures in the Annex if necessary in the future.

Elements that should be considered in discussions as found in Japan's submission

B.0 Possible core obligation: establish overarching obligations through whole-of-society approach to promote plastic circular economy and control plastic leakage into the marine and other environments.

The committee may wish to consider including the following potential option for control measures and voluntary measures.

- Establish an appropriate mechanism in the whole society to promote circular economy on plastic and control plastic leakage into the marine and other environments.
- Take necessary measures to promote plastic circularity in society, such as 3R, covering every stage of plastic lifecycle, such as production, sales, consumption, waste management and disposal, take into account national circumstances.
- The following effective measures at every stage of plastic lifecycle for plastic circularity and its leakage prevention must be clarified as an overview of all the clauses on core obligations to ensure that the necessary measures to be taken at each stage are covered in the convention, for example, shown as in the form of a list in an Annex and be properly reflected in NAPs.

<Production stage>

- Reduce plastic use out of the loop of plastic circularity, including single use plastic
- Enhance sustainable product design for the environment by production improvement such as volume reduction, simplification of packaging, ensuring long life of plastics, reuse of parts, use of mono materials, making it easier to break apart, sort out and transport for ease of recycling

- Promote evaluation of plastic product footprints on the environment, sharing information on product materials, cooperation between stakeholders, and standardization of product design and guideline
 - Develop and encourage use of substitute materials
 - Avoid production and use of plastics which are difficult to be collected and unable to be recycled, also known as problematic plastics, and promote the shift to substitute materials
- Collect and recycle used plastics by production sectors (promotion of reuse, improvement of recycling rate of plastics)

<Distribution/Consumption stage>

- Reduce single-use plastics
- Collect and recycle used plastics by distribution/consumption sectors (promotion of reuse, improvement of recycling rate of plastics)
- Raise awareness about the problem of global plastic pollution and importance of our behavioral changes in plastic use

<Waste management and disposal stage>

- Develop national sound waste management policies based on the appropriate priorities of waste management
- Ensure nation-wide sorting, collection and recycling systems for plastics
- Enhance recycling capacity in light of current usage levels and future projections to ensure environmentally sound waste management
- Prevent illegal dumping and littering, avoid open dumping and implement sound waste disposal
- Collect discharged plastics into the marine and other environments

<Others>

(International/Regional Cooperation, and other measures that can be adopted by future Conference of Parties(to be considered in light of scientific and socio-economic assessments and technological development)

3. Primary plastic polymers

The current Option Paper suggests in Section B.1 to include restrictions on primary plastic polymers as possible elements. In our views, however, it is important that any measures reflect different circumstances where each country is placed, depending on

how much plastic pollution is controlled. Measures with regard to the production or use of plastics should not be one size fits all restrictions such as imposing a blanket ban, as mentioned in Japan's submission.

As Japan proposes in its submission

- Reducing plastic use out of the loop of plastic circularity, including single use plastic
- collecting and recycling used plastics by production sectors such as promotion of reuse and improvement of recycling rate

We would like to add this option in this Section, because the more used plastics are collected and recycled in the circularity loop, there is less need to produce primary plastics accordingly.

Elements that should be considered in discussions as found in Japan's submission

B.1.Possible core obligation : phasing out and/of reducing the supply of, demand for and use of primary plastic polymers

Para 10 (a) Options for targets:

(iii) Increase use of recycled material and set a target for the reuse of plastic products, to promote to reduce plastic use out of the loop of plastic circularity.

4. Implementation measures: National action plans (NAPs) and related obligations

As Developing NAPs and National reporting are very important element to oblige the Member States to recognize their responsibility and take concrete actions to tackle plastic pollution, they should be not considered as mere means of implementation but as main core obligations. Therefore, the overall options on NAPs and National reporting should be moved to Section B "Core obligation".

In addition, the current Option Paper does not concretely refer to what should be common elements and minimum content of NAPs and it suggests that Harmonized guidance of NAPs be developed by the governing body, namely the 1st COP(para 30). However, such element and content should be clarified in the texts or Annexes of the instrument so that Member States can develop their own NAPs swiftly before the first COP. A specific format should also be determined by the adoption of the instrument.

Japan also proposes specific common elements to be included in NAPs by its submission, which are indispensable for a transparent and robust PDCA (Plan Do Check Action) mechanism for assessment of Members' actions and their progress. These elements should be taken into consideration for possible options.

Elements that should be considered in discussions as found in Japan’s submission

【This part should be moved to Section B “Core obligations”】

D.1.National action plans

D.2 National reporting

30. The committee may wish to consider the following potential options for generally applicable guidance on NAPs :

(d) A set of common elements and minimum content of NAPs, Harmonized guidance on NAPs and a specific format must be identified in (an) article(s) or (an) Annex(es) of the instrument.

(e) A set of common elements and minimum content of NAPs include targets and actions in the medium term as well as long-term strategies towards the realizations of the global objectives and goal of the instrument.

(f) Ensuring transparent assessment of progress by Members, visualization of implementations should be realized by using objective data and its evidence on measures in NAP and National reporting.

(g) Such data and its evidence include numerical information on production and consumption, leakage along the value chain, waste generation collection of waste, recycling(quantity/rates), collection of discharged plastics from the marine and other environments, policy targets and goals reflecting the global goal, detailed roadmap towards the realization of the targets and goals, and their achievements.

(h) Each Member State strives to visualize domestic flows of plastic in the plastic lifecycle and losses to and accumulated stocks in the environment as shown in Figure 1 of UNEP/PP/INC.1/7.(Such visualization would highlight priority areas for reducing plastic pollution based on national circumstances.)

5. Evaluation and recommendation by a technical expert group

Evaluation and recommendation by a technical expert group based on scientific knowledge should appropriately be reflected in making criteria regarding problematic and avoidable plastic products, determining which polymers and chemical materials are problematic, and developing guidelines (and specific measures regarding emission source of micro-plastic), among others.

Elements that should be considered in discussions as found in Japan’s submission

11 (b) add. To this end, establish a technical expert group on plastic that may provide recommendations to decide the criteria. The group should consist of experts, scientists, academia and other stakeholders such as industry sectors.

12 (a) add. To this end, establish a technical expert group on plastic that may provide recommendations to decide the criteria. The group should consist of experts, scientists, academia and other stakeholders such as industry sectors.

(13 (a) (i)(ii)

(b) (i)(ii)(iii)

Add. To this end, establish a technical expert group on plastic that may provide recommendations to decide the criteria. The group should consist of experts, scientists, academia and other stakeholders such as industry sectors.)

15 (a) add. To this end, establish a technical expert group on plastic that may provide recommendations to decide the criteria. The group should consist of experts, scientists, academia and other stakeholders such as industry sectors.

6. Core obligations at every stage of plastic lifecycle

Obligations at stages of distribution, sales, and consumption should be included as core obligations so that the whole and each lifecycle of plastic has obligations. To that end, “Awareness-raising and education” found in section E.I of the current Option Paper should be moved to section B “Core obligations.”

Awareness-raising and education are essential to promote behavioral change of consumers on the use of plastic.

Promoting collection and recycling of used plastics at distribution, sale and consumption stages including raising recycling rate of plastics should also be added as core obligations.

Elements that should be considered in discussions as found in Japan’s submission

B. X Possible core obligation: awareness-raising and education

(para 34 should be moved to Section B)

B.7 Possible core obligation: encourage reduce, reuse and repair of plastic products and packaging

16 .(b) Option for regulation and encouraging reduction, reuse, and recycle of plastic

- (iii) Recommend the parties promote reuse and recycle through collection of used plastics by production sector (promotion of reuse and recycle, improvement of recycling rate of plastics)
- (v) promote to collect and recycle used plastics by distribution and consumption sectors(promotion of reuse and recycle, improvement of recycling rate of plastics)

7. Strengthening waste management

Obligations regarding waste management such as domestic policies and enhancing recycling capacity should be included as core obligations.

Elements that should be considered in discussions as found in Japan's submission

Possible core obligations: strengthening waste management

14. (b) Options for regulating plastic waste:

- (iv) Set indicators and obligations for plastic waste collection, sorting and recycling, especially at the national level, including developing national sound waste management policies based on the appropriate priorities of waste management
- (vi) Enhance recycling capacity in light of current usage levels and future projections to ensure environmentally sound waste management
- (vii) Prevent illegal dumping and littering, avoid open dumping and implement sound waste disposal
- (viii) Collect discharged plastics into the marine and other environments