

Agenda item 4: New Zealand statement on the options paper

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Thank you Chair

New Zealand thanks the Secretariat for preparing a comprehensive options paper. The paper's inclusion of a range of upstream, midstream, and downstream measures provides a sound basis for our discussions here.

If we have any hope of eliminating plastic pollution, we must focus at the top of the waste hierarchy, and reduce plastic waste or avoid generating it in the first place.

To do this effectively, we must design plastic waste out of the system by focusing plastic production on high-value, reusable, and recyclable materials.

Over 99% of plastic is derived from fossil fuels. Fossil fuels that are too often kept cheap by state subsidies, which artificially lower the production cost of virgin plastic.

We have an opportunity to consider ways that environmentally-harmful subsidies, such as fossil fuel subsidies, can be addressed in the instrument. The reform of fossil fuel subsidies, as a fiscal incentive, can reduce the supply of, and demand for, virgin plastics and plastic products.

Chair

In the Pacific, plastic pollution has significant impacts on environments, economies, and livelihoods. Pacific Leaders have called for immediate action to reduce pollution. We need to ensure all countries have the means to adequately implement the instrument, through funding, capacity building, technical assistance, and technology transfer.

The task before us is daunting. It will require us to change the way we think. This shift in perception will come from sharing our knowledge, and from learning from those with lived experience and expertise in the sustainable management of plastic and waste.

Indigenous knowledge systems have much to offer as we seek a more sustainable approach to plastics. By engaging with indigenous knowledge holders, in a manner that appropriately protects where and how the knowledge is used, our collective efforts can benefit from approaches that might otherwise have been ignored.

Chair

UNEP estimates that today the world produces 400 million tonnes of plastic waste annually. This is over one million tonnes every day.

It has been 179 days since we last met.

In that time the world has created nearly 200 million tonnes of plastic waste.

This problem will not go away, and it will not slow down. Our deadline is tight, but we must not shy away from the urgency of this crisis. New Zealand returns to these negotiations as we began. We are prepared to engage constructively, to work with all delegations, and to remain focused on our common goal – to end plastic pollution.

Thank you.