

STATEMENT

**by H.E. Mr. Milorad Scepanovic, Ambassador,
Permanent Representative of Montenegro to UNEA**

**Second Meeting of the Ad Hoc Open Ended Expert Group on
marine litter and microplastics
3-7 December 2018, Geneva, Switzerland**

On behalf of the Government of Montenegro, allow me to express satisfaction with the organization of the Second Meeting of the Ad Hoc Open Ended Expert Group on marine litter and microplastics. We all must recognize the important work that has been done from the first UNEA Session until now, starting with the preparation of reports on research and gaps in knowledge on marine plastic litter and microplastics and on the effectiveness of relevant governance strategies and approaches, to the establishment of the Ad hoc open-ended Expert Group on marine litter and marine plastics as decided at the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, aiming at finding solutions for the overall goal of long-term elimination of the discharge of litter and plastics into the oceans.

In line with the findings of the two background reports related to the improvement of the governance framework, stakeholder engagement, improvements of solid waste management, implementation of appropriate reduction, recovery and restoration measures, improved understanding of the impacts of macro-plastics and the uncertainties around microplastics on economic sectors, human health, trophic flows and sensitive habitats, strengthening and harmonization of monitoring methods, improved administrative and regulatory capacities, and introduction of global standards, expectations from this last expert meeting before the fourth session of UNEA are to have concrete inputs, in particular related to the governance options identified in the assessment “Combating marine plastic litter and microplastics: An assessment of the effectiveness of relevant international, regional and subregional governance strategies and approaches”.

The importance of the UN Environment work and our commitments towards a pollution free planet will be confirmed also through discussions taking place at the Ministerial Conference “Innovative Solutions to Pollution in South East and Southern Europe” which is being organized in parallel with this meeting in Belgrade. At both fora, Montenegro reiterates the importance of effective actions at national, regional and international levels related to marine litter monitoring and management. Given the findings of the present reports that current governance strategies and approaches provide a fragmented approach that does not adequately address marine plastic litter and microplastics pollution, Montenegro supports the implementation of urgent actions for the establishment of a progressive holistic approach. Moreover, an adequate recognition of the potential risks to human health, particularly from micro- and nanoplastics, must be given above all at the international policy level, having in mind that plastic pollution needs to become an issue of concern to all citizens, through education and outreach activities that can reach all segments of the population.

At the third Session of UNEA we reconfirmed our commitment to the objectives and work of the UN Environment Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) - Barcelona Convention to implement Mediterranean Regional Plan on Marine Litter, as well through joining the Clean Seas Campaign. In the framework of that regional cooperation with UN Environment/MAP, it is my pleasure to report that Public Enterprise for Coastal Zone Management of Montenegro is implementing activities addressing marine litter priorities as they are indicated in the updated National Action

Plan to reduce pollution from land based sources in accordance with the Land Based Sources Protocol of the Barcelona Convention through the implementation of “Adopt-a-beach” pilot, analysis of the national regulatory framework in regards to the banning of single-use plastic bags, promotion of the Extended Producer Responsibility and Strengthen networking, exchange of data, experiences, and best practices at basin and sub-basin scale. Furthermore, different regional and subregional project activities for cleaner beaches in Montenegro which include also data collection are being carried out.

Further efforts are needed to ensure use of reliable scientific data and evidence-based decision making, including improvement of capacity to continuously monitor state of the environment and to detect human health-environment relations, all with the aim to achieve sound science-policy interface. Montenegro is contributing to these important processes through the ongoing implementation of the strategically planned subregional and national projects. It is worth mentioning the ongoing GEF Adriatic project which will allow the alignment of the national monitoring program of marine ecosystem with IMAP of the Barcelona Convention, including the Ecological Objective 10 – Marine litter and related indicators. These efforts will be further built up in the following years through the implementation of the IPA funded project which will support the effective transposition and implementation of Marine Strategy Framework Directive, including collection of additional data on marine environment.

With full awareness of our commitments undertaken in the accession process to the EU, but also of established strategic goals towards the sustainability of our society that take the central place in the National Sustainable Development Strategy until 2030 through which Montenegro fully committed to the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, it is our duty to keep contributing to the important global fight against marine litter undertaken by UNEA, trusting that we will achieve our common goal to ensure a healthy environment for current and future generations.