

Relevant to Item 4 of the AHOEEG agenda, *Discussion paper on barriers to combating marine litter and microplastics*

Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm here from the Break Free From Plastic movement, also speaking on behalf of the joint position of the Women, NGO, Children & Youth, Farmers, Trade Union & Workers, Indigenous Peoples, and Science & Technology major groups.

We first appreciate the significant and comprehensive analysis undertaken within this paper. Yet a few core limitations and misconceptions are inherent in it and others. One is a focus throughout this paper and our discussions here, that the problem is largely a behavioral one which can be solved through voluntary measures – like refusing a straw, not purchasing particular items, or simply pledging to do more recycling. Rather, the problem is a systemic issue with significant responsibility held by the industries which produce these plastics in the first place and flood the market with them. This is not simply a matter of choice; this is a matter of pushing major industries to change entire business models.

In the realm of waste management, incineration, waste-to-energy, or plastic-to-fuel technologies are not acceptable ways of dealing with plastic waste and cannot be considered environmentally sound approaches. These technologies are unsustainable and produce significant quantities of greenhouse gases, hazardous air pollutants, hazardous and highly toxic ash, and other residues.

This paper rightly highlights the need for inclusivity and principles of environmental justice in addressing the significant informational barriers present in the full system of plastic pollution and marine litter. Yet the continued focus, in this paper and throughout the background documents for this meeting, on technological interventions fails to sufficiently address the environmental justice approach needed to be affirm and transition the work currently being done by informal sectors of the waste management economy, like wastepickers in developing countries.

Furthermore, throughout this and the other papers, there continues to be a pervasive false perception that the main responsibility for the plastic pollution is on the limitations of South-East Asian countries' waste management systems. While published reports show that a significant portion of plastics entering the ocean are doing so from a small number of countries concentrated in this region, placing rhetorical or literal responsibility on these countries alone is misplaced, at best. A significant responsibility for the global and systemic marine litter, plastic pollution, and microplastics crises is on the corporations which produce an overwhelming amount of plastics that cannot be adequately disposed of, reused or recycled, within any country's waste management systems, not just those in South-East Asia.