

STATEMENT ON 30 MAY 2018 BY JANE PATTON FROM BREAK FREE FROM PLASTIC ON BEHALF OF WOMEN'S MAJOR GROUP REGARDING AGENDA ITEM 6. Environmental, social and economic costs and benefits of different response options

Thank you, 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, Indigenous Peoples, and Science & Technology major groups.

Following my NGO Group colleague's comments on the full life cycle of materials which eventually become litter in the marine or land environments, I'd like to relate a story of what the gaps in existing governance frameworks - including the failure to take the full life cycle into account - looks like at one point in the life cycle of these materials.

Recently, in my home state of Louisiana in the US, a bill was passed by the state legislature to recognize the "contributions" that a significant multinational petrochemical company has made to our state economy. As part of this recognition, it was cited that this company, which has 6 sites within just a few miles of each other in Louisiana, including the 4th largest refinery in the United States and several plastics plants, produces over 450,000 tonnes of polyethylene and nearly 100,000 tonnes of ethylene products each year. These plastic products include bottles, bags, wraps, and the like.

These kinds of recognitions from the state are not limited to plastics companies; they come in honor of multiple industries in Louisiana whose products eventually become sources of marine litter: paper, chemicals, electronics, and others.

These recognitions from the state, however, make no comments on the over \$1 billion dollars of tax subsidies automatically given to these companies each year from local authorities in just Louisiana. That is over \$1 billion dollars that doesn't fund schools each year. It doesn't fund health and hospitals. And the subsidies just keep going to these companies, despite efforts to fight them.

This particular recognition from the state also didn't take into account the hundreds of millions of dollars paid by local authorities each year in Louisiana and indeed across the world to process these hundreds of thousands of tonnes of plastic and other materials once they end up as waste.

These recognitions also don't comment on the millions of dollars of these tax subsidies which would have otherwise gone to the hospitals - facilities which are nevertheless still expected to treat local residents suffering from significant adverse health impacts resulting from industrial exposure, including unusually high rates of cancer, asthma, and other prolonged, expensive issues.

These recognitions from the legislature also don't take into account the very real limitations to wealth and quality of life suffered by the fenceline communities - most often communities of color - whose properties are devalued because of their proximity to these enormous paper, chemical, and plastic production facilities. The air is not clean. It smells. The water is not clean. It smells, which you likely wouldn't trust to drink, either.

Louisiana also has significant waterways and coastlines. In my home city of New Orleans, a city between a major lake and the largest river in the US, we recently tried to enact a ban to limit plastic bag litter. In response, the state government - the same body that recognized positively the production of hundreds

of thousands of tons of plastic each year – attempted to make it illegal for local authorities to ban or regulate any kind of plastic containers. Representatives from plastics manufacturers were there at that legislative hearing, speaking in support of making local bans illegal. Unfortunately, not every policy story about limiting the costs of marine litter is a positive one.

As we move forward to undertake significant efforts not only to strengthen the existing regional collaboration efforts to prevent marine litter, but also work toward an international governance structure aimed at sustainable consumption and production, this will necessarily shift the demand and thus the supply of plastics and other materials, removing significant costs from local communities like mine at the extraction and production side of the life cycle. As we undertake these efforts to strengthen international cooperation and governance on this issue, we should also keep in mind the precautionary principle of protecting health and communities, focusing our efforts on mitigating and preventing harm to the greatest extent possible and within the context of equity and environmental justice, especially with regard to the transition of workers who often come from the very fenceline communities harmed by extraction of single-use products.

Thank you.