

## PLASTICS AT UNEA

The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and several global environmental agreements have taken an interest in plastic pollution, especially marine plastic litter, recognising it as a serious and rapidly growing issue of global concern which requires an urgent and global response. Following the UNEA3 meeting in December 2017, UN Environment formed an Ad-Hoc Open-Ended Expert Group (AHOEEG) to present options to combat marine plastic litter and microplastics for global consideration of member states, experts, and civil society.

Several representatives of the [#BreakFreeFromPlastic](#) movement are in attendance for the first of two AHOEEG meetings in support of a joint call for [an international legally binding agreement on plastics and plastic pollution](#). Commonly referred to as "Option 3" in the content analyzed in this meeting, this position, endorsed by 6 of the 9 Major Groups and co-signed by many NGOs worldwide, calls for any such convention to include certain features including a binding global reduction target, caps on production and consumption of plastics, and requirements for loss prevention, collection, and recycling of all plastics.

[Issue 1](#): UNEA3 Progress on Plastics (30 Nov 2017)

[Issue 2](#): UNEA3 Progress on Plastics (4 Dec 2017)

[Issue 3](#): UNEA3 Progress on Plastics (6 Dec 2017)

[Issue 4](#): UNEA Progress on Plastics (30 May 2018)

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- Upcoming Events

## 29 - 31 MAY: AD-HOC OPEN-ENDED EXPERT GROUP



*Just trying to blend in...*

### *Outcomes of the AHOEEG*

The [3-day AHOEEG meeting](#) format was done in plenary session, with the agenda structured around discussion of documents prepared by UNEP for the meeting. Participants - including member states, major groups, and other stakeholders - traded prepared statements and comments on the documents, noting agreement or dissension, gaps or opportunities for further exploration.

Participating member states were not fully agreed on the ways this meeting's discussions will inform the second meeting's agenda or the work in the intervening months. In the final hours of the agenda, the co-chairs prepared a list of elements identified during discussion as needs for further research, review, and exploration. Yet member states did not reach consensus on how to use that list or even whether it was a full and faithful representation of the proceedings. Much of the discussion centered on whether the AHOEEG has a mandate to suggest work to the UNEP Secretariat (member states disagreed) and whether these elements should be tabled for negotiation and discussion during UNEA4 in March 2019.

The co-chair's full summary of the meeting and the annexed summary list can be found [here](#). Some highlights of the spaces for further exploration, following discussion during this first meeting of the AHOEEG:

- Engage existing frameworks: "Invite parties to the various conventions and international instruments to explore the possibilities existing under those other conventions, for future co-ordinated actions, especially with Basel and Stockholm, Regional Seas and London Conventions"
- Analyze the costs and benefits of inaction, and review strengthening current voluntary solutions across the waste hierarchy (improving recycling, redesign, alternative plastics, etc.)
- Review of data gaps on impacts and monitoring methods, including consolidation of the preparatory documents of this first meeting, review of existing standards and labeling, and "an exchange of scientific and expert

knowledge, using the most appropriate modalities including academic conferences, expert meetings of conventions and other agreements, on impacts of plastics on marine life, human health and ecosystem functioning"

- Identify potential useful models for governance such as from the Vienna Convention and its Montreal Protocol and analyze the role of existing instruments such as the Global Programme of Action on Marine Litter

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### *BFFP Reflections*

The #BreakFreeFromPlastic partners focused our plenary interventions and direct conversations with delegates on our recommendation for further action. Our [final prepared statement](#) hit on the following notes as we began to close out the first meeting's agenda:

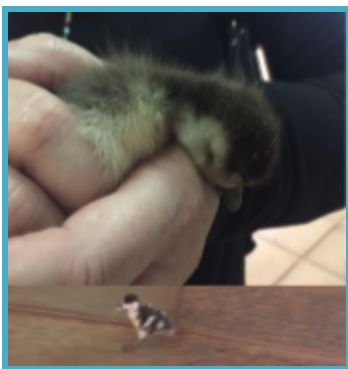
- Our work should be undertaken with urgency in a "start and strengthen" model as was so successfully done under the Montreal Protocol context;
- Most if not all of the work identified as a "gap" or "incomplete" has in fact already been performed by the [assessment report](#) prepared by UN Environment for UNEA-3;
- A two-pronged approach was proposed for the AHOEEG:
  - Invite parties to the existing conventions and international instruments (Basel, Stockholm, etc.) to explore the possibilities within those frameworks – some of which is already being done;
  - Invite UNEP to approach the various secretariats less formally to

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start collecting all relevant information without formal decisions by their governing bodies.

- UNEP should explore the feasibility, effectiveness, and limitations of these existing bodies in preparation of the November meeting;
- In support of ideas proposed by member states, we support the creation of regional meetings of member states and stakeholders in addition to the 2nd AHOEEG meeting, with Major Groups and Stakeholders maintaining access to documents and the ability to comment on the proceedings.



*Taking time to give a helping hand to a wayward duck chick.*

### *3,890,000 Tons of Plastic*

While the member states were debating in the final minutes of meeting, an intervention on behalf of the NGO Major Group was delivered by Christopher Chin from COARE, reminding the assembled delegates of the consequences of delay:

"I would like to provide a reality check to this discussion. In the time that we've been debating just this document, using the most conservative estimates, 570

tons of plastic have entered the ocean and will stay there forever or until we ingest it. 570 tons. Furthermore, if we wait until UNEA4 to produce these reports, another 3,890,000 tons will enter the ocean before we decide to even study these things. 3,890,000 tons."

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### *Next Meeting of the AHOEEG*

The proposed dates for the 2nd meeting of the AHOEEG are 26 – 30 November, and the location is being settled between Nairobi and Geneva.

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### *Upcoming Events*

#### 5 JUNE

World Environment Day  
*Worldwide; hosted by India*

#### 3-6 SEPT

Meeting of the [Open-ended Working Group of the Basel Convention](#) (OEWG 11)  
*Geneva, Switzerland*

#### 15 SEPT

[World Cleanup Day](#)  
*Worldwide*

#### TBC NOV

2nd Meeting of this AHOEEG  
*Nairobi, Kenya or Geneva, Switzerland*

#### 11-15 MAR 2019

UNEA4  
*Nairobi, Kenya*

*Find more upcoming events [here](#)*

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### Partners in the UNEA Progress on Plastics Update



**#break  
free  
from  
plastic**

*#BreakFreeFromPlastic is a global movement envisioning a future free from plastic pollution. Since its launch in September 2016, over 1,000 organisations from across the world have joined the movement to demand massive reductions in single-use plastics and to push for lasting solutions to the plastic pollution crisis. These organisations share the common values of environmental protection and social justice, which guide their work at the community level and represent a global, unified vision. Sign up at [www.breakfreefromplastic.org](http://www.breakfreefromplastic.org).*

Editor & Contact: Jane Patton, No Waste Louisiana ([jane@nowastela.org](mailto:jane@nowastela.org))

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