

GAIA/EIA/OceanCare/Sciaena - Intervention at the 17 March 2020 Online Briefing for Stakeholders regarding the zero draft of the 2020 UN Ocean Conference Declaration

Good afternoon everybody and thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives, the Environmental Investigation Agency, OceanCare and Sciaena.

The marine plastic pollution crisis is about to get much worse, with planned exponential growth in virgin plastic production. We expect an additional 100 million tonnes of plastic per year to our markets and ecosystems by 2025. It is no longer an option to limit global action to voluntary knowledge-sharing and cooperation.

We believe the declaration should therefore support the call for a new, legally binding global treaty covering the lifecycle of plastics and reducing plastics at source. It should urge the Fifth United Nations Environment Assembly to establish a working group to negotiate a mandate for such a treaty in 2021.¹ We believe this would fit best either in paragraph 4, or following paragraph 8.

The declaration should also emphasize plastic waste prevention, including through bans on single-use plastics, and support for reuse and refill systems, rather than adopting an end-of-pipe approach limited to waste management in paragraph 10(c), particularly given that plastic waste incineration generates over 1.4 tonne of CO₂eq per tonne of plastic, in addition to toxic ash and air pollution.²

We also believe that the reference of biodegradable materials in paragraph 10(c) should be removed. The mere substitution of single-use plastic products and packaging with biodegradable alternatives would simply displace harmful impacts to other parts of our ecosystems, bringing pressure on water, land, biodiversity, among other areas.

We are witnessing growing pollution including marine plastic pollution from so-called biodegradable plastics, which actually only compost in industrial facilities, which are not available in most places. We can no longer afford to remain within the disposable, linear production and consumption framework, and must shift towards a toxic-free and just circular economy.

We thank the ambassadors of Palau and Denmark for their decisive leadership on this occasion, and we will submit full comments in writing.

¹ CIEL, EIA, Massey University, COARE (2019): [Toward a New Global Convention with a Multi-Layered Governance Approach to Address Plastic Pollution](#)

² UKWIN (2018): [Evaluation of the climate change impacts of waste incineration in the United Kingdom](#)

