



New Zealand Product Stewardship Council

C/- Zero Waste Academy
Massey University, PN433
Private Bag 11222
Palmerston North 4442
New Zealand

Tēna koe Minister Sage

The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) Resolutions on Marine Litter and Microplastics has the potential to stem the 8 million tonnes of plastic pollution currently entering the world's oceans every year. The most recent Resolution 3/7 highlights the urgency of the global plastics crisis and encourages Member States and stakeholders to act. However, the 193 Member States generally appear willing to support voluntary initiatives, remain distracted by 'end-of-pipe' waste management concerns, and prioritise industry protection. However, there has been a consensus among the United Nations Open Ended Expert Group (UNOEEG) taskforce (NGO) that if we are going to make any real headway in addressing the current plastics crisis, what is most urgently needed is a global instrument focussed on preventing the production of toxic, unnecessary, avoidable, and non-recyclable plastics. Negotiations toward a legally binding international agreement to protect our biosphere from plastic pollution requires political leadership from member states - including New Zealand. We are very heartened to see that New Zealand is supportive of a global instrument but we would like to see a New Zealand-led proposal for the kind of legally-binding international treaty see the widest range of successes and have the greatest impact on the global plastics crisis.

Plastics pollution is a matter of common concern for all humankind. This is why we need a legally-binding international agreement with strict provisions to curb the production of plastics that degrade the marine environment, including 'unnecessary' and 'unavoidable' plastics, unrecyclable and toxic plastics, and the sale of ready-made microplastics (e.g. microbeads, microfibers, and glitter). Just as the 1987 Montreal Protocol was required to protect the ozone layer by phasing out substances such as CFCs, a landmark global agreement would be a huge step towards protecting our marine environment by phasing out plastics that

are degrading our oceans and our food chain. Denmark has also presented the Basel Convention as a potential pre-existing global instrument and suitable model. Our OEEG taskforce see greater potential in a stand-alone treaty based on the Montreal Protocol because it is better suited to deal with the full life of plastics and because of its focus on prevention and precaution.

The United Nations Open-Ended Expert Group and UNEA4 will meet for the second time in Nairobi in early 2019. We hope New Zealand will lead a proposal for an international legally binding instrument at these meetings that goes beyond the Basel Convention proposal to a global instrument that will capture the full life of plastics. A successful treaty will have strong prevention, monitoring, and enforcement mechanisms and yet will be flexible enough to provide support and incentives for all nations to phase out the production of non-recyclable and toxic plastics. The support needed for a mandate to begin negotiations on such an agreement will require collaborations with our neighbouring states in the South Pacific region. New Zealand's civil society and research communities strongly support work towards this crucial piece of international law (as indicated below).



Ngā mihi nui

Dr Trisia Farrelly,

Co-Founder and Trustee, NZPSC

Member of Taskforce to United Nations Open Ended Environmental Working Group (NGO)

Founding Member, New Zealand Alternative and New Zealand Plastic Pollution Coalition (APPA)

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