

# UNEA3 Progress on Plastics Update

## Issue 2 (4 Dec 2017)

### PLASTICS AT UNEA3

The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and several global environmental agreements have taken an interest in plastic pollution, recognising it as a serious and rapidly growing issue of global concern that needs an urgent global response. Norway has submitted a draft [resolution to UNEA3](#) calling for the establishment of an Open-Ended Ad Hoc Working Group to make recommendations to strengthen international governance structures for combating marine plastic litter and microplastics that could lead to the proposition of global convention.

Several member representatives of the [#BreakFreeFromPlastic](#) movement are attending UNEA3 in support of a joint call for [an international legally binding agreement on plastics and plastic pollution](#). Any such convention should include certain features: a binding global reduction target, caps on production and consumption of plastics, and requirements for loss prevention, collection, and recycling of all plastics. Global quality standards and market restrictions should accompany a set of strong enforcement mechanisms to ensure governments and industries comply with global targets for reduction.

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

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## 29 - 30 Nov: OPEN-ENDED MEETING OF COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES



*Wonder Women (and Men!) breaking free from plastic*

### *Norway Resolution Update*

As of this writing (Mon, 4 Dec), the Norway resolution on marine litter and microplastics has not yet reached its final form.

The [#BreakFreeFromPlastic](#) partner groups, including all those who support the drafting of this newsletter, are continuing to support the following core elements of the resolution:

- Call for implementing container deposit schemes and other forms of extended responsibility of plastic producers, in terms of both waste

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management and full environmental and health costs of plastic;

- Focus on upstream solutions and prevention, not on clean-ups or consumer behavior change;
- Clear mandate for an Ad Hoc Open-Ended Working Group to explore international governance structures to address plastic pollution and marine litter.

After multiple formal and informal negotiation sessions and multiple readings, the resolution continues to include most of this language, and many countries have spoken in strong support of recognizing industry responsibility, supporting upstream solutions, and the creation of an open-ended (i.e. inclusive of stakeholders and civil society) working group with a mandate to explore possible outcomes, including legally binding ones.

[#BreakFreeFromPlastic](#) continues to advocate for open-ended meetings leading up to UNEA4, including Member States and non-governmental organizations, to discuss the recommendations (including but not limited to governance structures) called for in the report following UNEA2.

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### [#NoDirtyBusiness Campaign Update](#)

In Issue 1, we reported on the speech Executive Secretary Erik Solheim gave to the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum, in which he seemed to equate the work of non-governmental organizations with that of terrorists, a position which could create a life-threatening situation with our partners working in countries already hostile toward NGOs.

Despite our [#NoDirtyBusiness](#) silent protest in that session, Solheim repeated his remarks in the opening plenary session of the Open Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (OECPR) on Wednesday, while speaking to the environmental and political leaders of all Member States. Because of the real danger this creates and exacerbates, several NGOs led by the Women's Major Group called for an apology from Solheim with the viral [#ErikMustApologize](#) campaign. Solheim attempted to explain himself on Twitter and even met with a small group of NGOs with conciliatory remarks, but he refused to move away from openly pro-business position on environmental issues.

Following this campaign, at the closing session of the OECPR, Solheim reinforced to the gathered Member States the vital role that civil society and NGOs play in this work. While recognizing the "life and death" nature of environmental protection work, he reinforced how much the world "needs all those non-governmental organizations driving the environmental agenda."

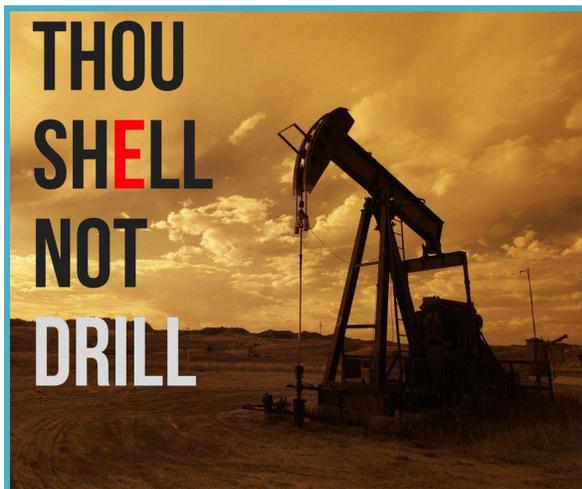


*Helda Khasmy speaks*

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In response, Helda Khasmy of Indonesia spoke passionately on behalf of the Women Major Group, calling for a just, equitable, and inclusive transition away from neoliberal economic policies in support of unrestrained growth, so that citizens and civil society are no longer in danger, either from unsustainable development or from political hostility. Naming the theme of this UNEA, Khasmy made clear that “we [only] have to #BeatPollution today because decisions were made to structure our economies towards extractivism, mass production of plastics, consumption of fossil fuels, and use of pesticides and fertilisers in our agriculture.”

The weekend’s [Twitterstorm](#) was in response to the Policy, Research, and Business Forum hosted by UNEP adjacent to UNEA-3, largely interpreted by the NGO Major Groups to be a greenwashing of the solutions desperately needed to Beat Pollution and [#BreakFreeFromPlastic](#). The media push achieved over 1 million impressions, more than 50% of social media reach achieved by the entire UNEA3!



*Upcoming Events of Interest*

MON, 4 DEC

12.00 - 14.00 in the Green Tent  
*The reality of plastic pollution and solutions to address it*  
([#BreakFreeFromPlastic](#) & CIEL event)

TUES, 5 DEC

7.30 - 9:30 in the Clean Seas tent  
*Breakfast Dialogue: Beat #marinelitter - does international governance get it? (hosted by Norway)*

12.00 - 14.00 in the Green Tent  
*Pollution and Gender: Why it matters*  
(WECF, WEP, BaliFokus, IPEN / Women’s Major Group event)

13.15 - 14.45 in Conference Room 3-4  
*Together against Marine litter and microplastics*

12.00 - 12.45 in the Clean Seas Tent  
*Awareness to Action: Using Art to Turn the Tide on Plastic*

17.00 - 18.00 in the Clean Seas Tent  
*Planet Plastic? Marine Litter’s Impacts on Biodiversity*

18.30 - 20.00 in Conference Room 1  
*Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on “People and Pollution”*

WED, 6 DEC

12.30 - 13.30 in the Clean Seas Tent  
*Alternative Materials - silver bullet or friendly fire?*

Full UNEA3 schedules found [here](#)

### Why are Plastics a Problem?

The UNEA3 theme is #BeatPollution, and many stakeholders and resolutions appear to assume that plastic pollution begins and ends with the marine environment. However, plastic pollution affects the planet and its peoples in many ways:

#### *Plastic is made of fossil fuels.*

Nearly 99% of plastics are made of fossil fuels and increasingly natural gas.<sup>1</sup> Oil extraction and processing poisons soil, air, and water, damaging public health and communities.<sup>2</sup>



#### *Plastic manufacturing has been harming workers for generations.*

Employees working in extraction and manufacturing centers around the world, even in the US, suffer from very high levels of exposure to bisphenols, phthalates, and other toxic additives used in the manufacture of plastic.<sup>3</sup>



#### *Consumer goods markets worldwide are being flooded with plastic.*

Planned plastic production expansion will total \$164 billion by 2025,<sup>4</sup> much of which will be pushed into consumer goods markets.



#### *Plastic damages your long-term health.*

Chemicals leached by plastics are in the blood and tissue of nearly all of us. Exposure to them is linked to cancers, birth defects, impaired immunity, endocrine disruption and other ailments.<sup>5</sup>



#### *Plastic waste is not used as a resource.*

Worldwide, since 1950 only 12% of plastic waste was "managed" with incineration, and only 9% was recycled. The rest - 79% - has accumulated in the environment.<sup>6</sup>



#### *Plastic piles up in the environment.*

Roughly 79% of all plastic ever made - 4,725 million metric tons - has accumulated in land and marine environments, entangling and poisoning wildlife.<sup>7</sup>



1. "Fossils, Plastics, & Petrochemical Feedstocks." Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL). 2017.
2. Glauser, W. "New legitimacy to concerns about fracking and health." CMAJ. 2014.
3. Hines, C.J. et al. "Urinary Bisphenol A (BPA) Concentrations among Workers in Industries that Manufacture and Use BPA in the USA." Annals of Work Exposures and Health. 2017.; Petrovicova, I et al. "Occupational exposure to phthalates in relation to gender, consumer practices and body composition." Environmental Science and Pollution Research. 2016.
4. "How Fracked Gas, Cheap Oil, and Unburnable Coal are Driving the Plastics Boom." CIEL. 2017.
5. "Perils of Plastics: Risks to Human Health & the Environment." Arizona State University Biodesign Inst. 2010
6. Geyer, R.; Jambeck, J.; Law, K.L. "Production, use, and fate of all plastics ever made." Science Advances. 2017.
7. Thompson, R.C. et al. "Plastics, the Environment and Human Health." Biological Sciences. 2009.

