

2022 UNITED NATIONS OCEAN CONFERENCE
ONLINE STAKEHOLDER BRIEFING: INPUTS TO THE POLITICAL
DECLARATION ZERO DRAFT

23 March 2022

10:30 – 11:30 AM (EDT, New York)

Intervention

Christopher Chin (COARE, CIEL, EIA, OceanCare, BFFP Movement)

Greetings, excellencies and colleagues. I am honored to offer this intervention on behalf of the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL), Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), The Center for Oceanic Awareness, Research, and Education (COARE), OceanCare, and the global Break Free From Plastic Movement.

We would like to offer some enhancements to this draft statement, especially given the overwhelming support for – and momentum behind – the recently adopted negotiating mandate for a legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution at UNEA 5.

The UNEA resolution calls to end plastic pollution, including in marine and other environments. It notes that it is of a transboundary nature and needs to be tackled, together with its impacts, through a full lifecycle approach. We therefore request that the reference to ‘lifecycle approaches’ in this declaration refer not only to “comprehensive” approaches, but to ‘full’ lifecycle approaches, specifically from plastic production, through to design and use and environmentally sound waste management.

Paragraph 11d of the draft declaration refers to biodegradation, which is a term so often misused and misleading that some jurisdictions prohibit its use in labeling for consumer goods. We believe the science behind biodegradability is still poorly understood and has the potential to lead to false solutions to the plastics crisis and other unintended consequences. Instead, we suggest language consistent with UNEA’s resolution to promote true circularity of materials and resource efficiency, including sustainable production and consumption of plastics, reuse, and remanufacture. We would encourage references to recycling to emphasize safe and non-toxic circularity.

Lastly, the current political declaration aims to reduce to zero *additional* marine plastic litter, which we do not feel adequately reflects the ambition required for the crisis at hand. Plastic pollution leakage into aquatic ecosystems has grown sharply in recent years and is projected to more than double by 2030. We would like to encourage this political declaration to embrace the same ambition adopted at UNEA, which aims to eliminate plastic pollution in the marine and other environments.

We have the opportunity now to build on the terrific momentum of UNEA 5.2 by setting our ambitions high – to end plastic pollution and negotiate a comprehensive legally binding instrument by the end of 2024. If we stick to this path we still have a chance to meet the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Christopher CHIN
Executive Director
The Center for Oceanic Awareness, Research, and Education (COARE)

Please find below our suggested changes to the draft political declaration. Proposed additions are ***italicized and underlined***, while deletions are in ~~red and struck through~~.

11c. Preventing, reducing and controlling marine pollution of all kinds, from both land-and sea-based activities, including nutrient pollution, untreated wastewater, solid waste discharges, hazardous substances, pollution from ship wrecks and anthropogenic underwater noise, through improving our understanding of their sources, pathways and impacts on marine ecosystems, and through contributing to comprehensive ***and full*** life-cycle approaches, that include ***promoting sustainable production and consumption and*** improved waste management,