

Second informal virtual meeting of Heads of Delegation to the INC on Plastic Pollution

held on 30 April 2026

Chair's summary

Introduction

On 30 April 2026, I convened the second informal virtual Heads of Delegation (HODs) meeting for the period leading up to INC-5.4 as indicated in the roadmap set out in my second letter of 16 May. As I noted in my third letter of 16 April, which emphasized a step-by-step approach leading up to INC-5.4, the informal virtual HODs meetings are being held to work toward a general review of relevant topics requiring targeted discussion.

During this informal virtual HODs meeting, Members were invited to provide reflections on two guiding questions (provided below), and I was encouraged by the strong engagement of the Members and by the constructive and pragmatic spirit in which views were shared.

This summary note is intended to provide an overview of the responses received during the meeting, so that the discussions that took place may continue to be built on, as appropriate, by the Membership of the INC as we move toward INC-5.4. It is not intended to fully reflect all visions and comments, or to prejudice any of the positions of Members.

Update from Members on Member-led initiatives

At the outset, I wish to thank the participants that provided updates on ongoing informal Member-led discussions, including on the topic of product design, as well as related to an upcoming Member-led meeting to be held in Dakar, Senegal from 10-12 May 2026.

I recall that these Member-led initiatives are not part of the roadmap and that it is ultimately the sole prerogative of the Committee to consider any proposals that could become potential solutions. However, I encourage such engagements and reports of Member-led initiatives or outreach efforts and continue to emphasize the importance of ensuring that all Members are informed of these meetings and any progress made, with a view to bringing reports of this progress back to the formal setting.

Informal exchange of views with Members based on guiding questions

Members provided their reflections on the two questions I circulated prior to the meeting. The informal exchanges were focused and informative and covered a variety of aspects that enriched our understanding of the issues presented.

1. How to provide adequate clarity regarding scope, that can assist with the operation and implementation of the instrument?

A range of views relating to the topic of scope was shared, with many Members emphasizing the consideration of some concepts, including national sovereignty, jurisdictions, national circumstances and capabilities, Common but Differentiated Responsibilities, and avoidance of overlaps with existing trade regimes.

Some Members highlighted that the discussion on scope should not be done in isolation, but with a package approach.

During the informal meeting, many Members highlighted some approaches, including the following:

- a. Some Members noted that a **standalone article on scope** is essential, as it provides certainty, coherence and legal clarity; guides the interpretation and implementation of all provisions; defines the boundaries of application; provides a common baseline for negotiations; eliminates ambiguity and fragmentation; promotes transparency; and ensures complementarity with other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and frameworks.
- b. Some Members expressed **flexibility with either a standalone article or implicit referencing of scope** in relevant control measures and operative provisions, while emphasizing that clarity and a common understanding on what is being included in the instrument for future implementation is crucial. Some Members noted that it may be easier to make progress by explicitly clarifying what is not included under the instrument, through potentially a negative list that could consider, among other topics, medical uses and specialized products, as well as energy sources and plastic polymers. Other elements in this discussion could consider adverse impacts on national security and critical infrastructure, including by disrupting supply chains for relevant products and chemicals.

Some Members noted that certain conditions could be clarified in specific provisions, such as by indicating in each article what is not intended to be addressed under that article. It was also pointed out that clearly defined control measures are needed and vague terminologies should be avoided.

In this line of thinking, some ideas were shared about a stepwise approach on the scope, being defined in part through procedural language, such as by clarifying the mandate of the future governing body of the instrument. The scope could also start with addressing entry points such as waste management and legacy pollution, with further consideration of other aspects as the process evolves and confidence builds among Parties.

- c. On the other hand, some Members were of the view that **no standalone article** might be necessary as UNEA Resolution 5/14 has already delineated the scope of the instrument as applying to the full life cycle of plastics, and that all sources of plastic pollution and releases should be recognized under the instrument. In this logic, a standalone article on scope may constrain the full life cycle approach to plastic pollution and impact the flexibility of the instrument and any related scientific research. However, flexibility could be reflected through an opt-in/opt-out approach, phased implementation and science-based COP decisions on further actions.

Views were expressed that operative paragraph 3 of UNEA Resolution 5/14 should be adhered to when dealing with scope, with some stressing that all sources and causes of plastic pollution throughout the plastic life cycle should be within the scope, while others emphasized that waste management, leakage, innovation and circularity are central to the scope.

Despite these different views on the form of how to address this issue, some interventions indicated that consideration should first be given to substance, then to the form of the scope of the instrument, as this may help in understanding the nature of the debate, as well as the main concerns, to then proceed to craft the formulation of appropriate text.

2. How can complementarity and strengthened collaboration with existing legal regimes be ensured, without duplicating or conflicting with mandates?

Most Members shared the view that it is important to ensure coherence and enhance synergies with existing mandates and MEAs and that contradiction and duplication and overlapping compliance burdens should be avoided as this weakens implementation efforts and increases associated costs. It was also noted by some that defining scope could help avoid duplication between MEAs. The relevance of avoiding duplication with specific MEAs and organizations was highlighted by many Members, including for example: the Basel Convention, on transboundary movements of plastic waste; the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, on chemical additives; the Global Framework on Chemicals; Intergovernmental Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution; International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from ships (MARPOL) and International Maritime Organization; among many others.

Some Members suggested that the Secretariat could map existing frameworks and legal regimes that are relevant to the mandate of the INC, as a way of informing these discussions.

The importance of respecting legal autonomy of existing regimes, without undermining their respective mandates was mentioned by many interventions. Many Members also made reference to possible gaps that are insufficiently addressed by other agreements, which should be addressed in order to deliver solutions, and to add value to global governance, while ensuring independence of the instrument. These concepts were highlighted, taking note that nothing in the future instrument shall affect any rights and obligations of Parties under existing international agreements, or prejudice the membership and legal status of Parties in relation to existing legal regimes.

Members noted the importance of promoting cooperation with other MEAs on many topics, including reporting systems (avoiding duplication), information exchange, scientific knowledge, technical transfer, technical assistance, capacity building, and design. It was also noted that such cooperation could be achieved through a variety of approaches, including an obligation for the Secretariat of the future instrument to cooperate with other Secretariats; for the governing body to cooperate with other governing bodies on implementation, technical guidance and scientific coordination; by strengthening coordination of governing bodies of MEAs; or by referencing the interplay between relevant MEAs in preamble, principles or other provisions. A standalone article on cooperation and coordination/complementarity with other MEAs was also proposed, in particular for technology transfer, technical assistance and information sharing. Some Members expressed a preference to have the future governing body determine how it may want to engage with the governing bodies or other MEAs when such coordination is relevant to the implementation of the future instrument.