

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

held on 3 and 4 June 2026

Chair's summary

Introduction

On 3 and 4 June 2026, I convened the third 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](#). The meeting was conducted in two sessions to accommodate delegates in different time zones.

During this informal virtual HODs meeting, Members were invited to share reflections on two interconnected topics, introduced through the following guiding questions:

- 1. What essential elements must be reflected in the instrument in order to address plastic products, with a view to delivering the mandate of UNEA Resolution 5/14 and enabling future implementation of provisions? Which elements can be left to decisions by the governing body?*
- 2. How can the objective of the instrument and the monitoring of progress be strengthened through national plans and national reporting?*

The pragmatic and constructive engagement of the Members showed that we are making progress in the step-by-step approach leading up to INC-5.4, as detailed in my [third letter of 16 April](#).

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, including at the upcoming in-person HODs meeting to be held from Tuesday 30 June to Friday 3 July 2026 at the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON).

This summary note is not intended to fully reflect all visions and comments, nor to prejudge the positions of Members.

Update on country initiatives

I wish to thank the participants who provided updates on ongoing informal discussions organized and facilitated by countries. In this meeting, we heard an oral report about the meeting held in Dakar, Senegal from 10-12 May 2026, self-organized by a group of Members.

Although these initiatives organized and facilitated by countries are not part of the Roadmap, they represent a positive signal of the interest of Members to engage in substantive discussions, and I encourage everyone to continue to do so. At the same time, I would like to strongly underline that ideas or proposals discussed in these spaces must be duly considered by the full Membership of the Committee, as it is ultimately the sole prerogative of the Committee to consider any proposals that could become potential solutions. I emphasize the importance of ensuring that all Members of the Committee are informed of these meetings and any progress made in that context.

Informal exchange of views based on guiding questions

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

Views on a number of **cross-cutting elements** were heard during the meeting, in particular on the importance of avoiding duplication and ensuring complementarity with other existing global regimes, in particular the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm (BRS) Conventions, the Global Framework on Chemicals and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution (ISP-CWP); safeguarding the multilateral trading system and avoiding arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination in international trade; consensus-based decision-making; science-based approaches; just transition; recognition of common but differentiated responsibilities; and that the instrument must not undermine national security or adversely impact critical infrastructure.

1. What essential elements must be reflected in the instrument in order to address plastic products, with a view to delivering the mandate of UNEA Resolution 5/14 and enabling future implementation of provisions? Which elements can be left to decisions by the governing body?

The article on plastic products was noted as a central pillar of the instrument by many Members. Many Members recalled the mandate as provided in UNEA resolution 5/14, with some stating the mandate is to address plastic pollution rather than addressing plastic as a material, noting that plastics and plastic products are not inherently considered pollutants. Other Members emphasized that the future instrument must remain aligned with the mandate to address the full life cycle of plastics.

There was broad understanding that the inclusion of some elements can enjoy convergence as a basis for discussions, though considering how these elements are reflected in the instrument may require additional work. These elements include national measures and actions on plastic products; common reference criteria and factors for identifying plastic products to guide national actions; reporting and information-sharing to enable transparency and experience-sharing; and non-binding common guidance/guidelines for national actions to be developed and considered by the future governing body.

In the meantime, some Members emphasized the importance of including a set of globally agreed restrictive measures to ensure a level playing field. This could include a process or mechanism for Parties to identify plastic products, based on agreed criteria, for global actions. This was proposed to be complemented by (and not necessarily replace) national measures for plastic products, other than those subject to global actions, that could be identified on the basis of the same criteria. Some Members also raised the need for an initial list of plastic products that would be subject to restrictive global measures. Proposed flexibility measures included opt-out options, essential-use exemptions, and transitional periods.

Some Members emphasized that sustainable production and consumption begins at the design stage, with elements such as plastic product design, plastic waste management, and existing/legacy plastic pollution identified as core elements of the instrument. Improving waste management capacity, promoting innovation, increasing circularity of plastics and extended producer responsibility (EPR) were elements highlighted by some Members as central to addressing plastic pollution, and designing plastic products for durability,

recyclability, repairability, and material efficiency can reduce the volume of plastic that becomes waste.

The need to respect and consider national circumstances and capabilities was broadly recognized, with some viewing prescriptive, top-down global measures as not appropriate for plastic products.

Some **common reference criteria** that were raised for identifying plastic products under the instrument included whether there is a high likelihood of them entering the environment; whether there is difficulty associated with reusing, recycling, composting or redesigning; the availability and affordability of alternatives and substitutes; whether they have a high likelihood of posing risk to human health and the environment; or whether they contain chemical additives and microplastics. While support was heard for inclusion of such criteria in the instrument, there were also proposals to provide the framework for identifying criteria in the instrument, with the common criteria and guidance to be developed and agreed by the governing body by consensus to guide national action.

There was broad recognition of the need for the establishment of **subsidiary bodies**, as this could enable further evolution and progressive strengthening of the instrument over time, taking into account evolving science and knowledge, socio-economic implications and the availability of alternatives and substitutes. At the same time, Members expressed different views on whether to establish such bodies within the text of the instrument or through decisions of the future governing body, as well as the composition, scope, role, functions, and institutional arrangements of the bodies.

Some Members recalled that other elements should be reflected in the instrument in relation to addressing plastic products. Among these, releases and leakages; means of implementation, including finance, capacity building, technology transfer, and technical assistance; promoting scientific cooperation, research and innovation; regular review and effectiveness evaluation; and procedures for the adoption and amendment of annexes.

Members noted a range of elements that could be left to decisions of the **governing body**, including modalities and procedures of the subsidiary bodies; formats, periodicity and indicators for evaluating collective progress, national reporting, national plans and other operational elements; guidelines on technical aspects, such as product design, national EPR systems; procedures for updating lists of criteria; and annexes on plastic products subject to restrictive measures to be developed and expanded over time through decisions of the governing body, taking into account the recommendations of the subsidiary body. It was also noted by some that the governing body should address technical and operational matters only.

Noting the outstanding divergent views regarding some of the elements, there were suggestions to consider elements with a high degree of alignment at this stage, while a process could be put in place to allow for subsequent discussions and evolution of the instrument over time, including through the governing body of the instrument and subsidiary bodies.

2. *How can the objective of the instrument and the monitoring of progress be strengthened through national plans and national reporting?*

It was highlighted by some Members that the **objective** of the instrument is to protect human health and the environment from plastic pollution.

There was broad convergence that national plans and reporting are essential tools and integral elements of the future instrument to ensure effective implementation and achievement of the instrument's objectives, and to enable assessment of collective progress.

It was further noted that **national plans** can allow Parties to achieve multiple objectives at the domestic level, such as: to share details of implementation policies; develop measurable national targets and timelines; set priorities while maintaining flexibility to adapt to national contexts; contribute to global action and coordination; ensure transparency and policy coherence; identify implementing gaps and needs; send signals for the integration of private sector investment; coordinate across sectors; and facilitate broad stakeholder engagement. The need to avoid creating unnecessary burdens was raised, particularly for developing country Parties.

Views were heard that national plans could translate global obligations into concrete national actions, as well as that national plans are the primary delivery engine of the instrument. Further to this, a global target with nationally determined contributions towards a shared goal was proposed by some Members as a potential architecture of the instrument.

Some noted that elaboration of national plans should be mandatory and updated regularly while others expressed support for the non-mandatory updating of such plans.

On **reporting**, it was pointed out that it can enable Parties to track progress; identify implementation needs, challenges and financial gaps; ensure transparency and accountability; and share good practices and experiences.

It was noted by some that reporting requirements should remain proportional to legally binding obligations, and Parties should only be required to report on implementation obligations under the instrument, while voluntary elements could be encouraged to be included in the national reports.

On both **national plans and reporting**, it was noted the governing body should provide guidance and a common format to enable coordinated global action, while retaining flexibility, taking into account national capabilities, data availability, and institutional and infrastructure readiness.

It was emphasized that obligations on the development of national plans and reporting should be explicitly linked to the provision of adequate, predictable, timely and accessible means of implementation, including financial resources, capacity building, technology transfer, and technical assistance; with recognition for the special circumstances of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs), and landlocked developing countries (LLDCs).

It was also emphasized that reporting and national plans should be non-burdensome and avoid duplication with obligations under other existing international legal regimes.

Effectiveness evaluation was highlighted by many as an important element to ensure regular monitoring of progress towards achieving the objective of the instrument. Both

national plans and reporting were acknowledged as important elements for tracking the progress and effectiveness of the instrument. Additionally, some Members noted that data from various sources, such as scientific assessments and monitoring, will be key to the effective monitoring of progress against the instrument's objectives, with the outcomes of such evaluations to be considered by the governing body for decisions on further work, including possible actions to facilitate more effective implementation. The importance of taking into consideration best available science, traditional knowledge, and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples was also noted.

It was emphasized that the governing body should monitor and evaluate all aspects of means of implementation to ensure adequate and effective support to developing country Parties. Monitoring of progress should therefore include monitoring of the support provided through finance, capacity building, technology transfer and technical assistance in addition to actions undertaken by the Parties.

It was also noted that effectiveness evaluation and national reporting must remain facilitative and non-punitive, focusing on evaluating the world's collective trajectory rather than the individual performance of any Party.