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European Union

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**NOTE**

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From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Delegations

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Subject: Report on the Ministerial Conference on Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution at Geneva, co-convened by Ecuador, Germany, Ghana and Vietnam with support of the UNEP Secretariat

- Information from the German delegation, supported by the Portuguese and Swedish delegations

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Delegations will find in the Annex an information note from the German delegation, supported by the Portuguese and Swedish delegations, on the above subject, to be dealt with under 'Any other business' at the Council (Environment) meeting on 6 October 2021.

**Report on the Ministerial Conference on Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution in Geneva,  
co-convened by Ecuador, Germany, Ghana and Vietnam  
with support from the UNEP Secretariat**

**- Information from the German delegation, supported by the Portuguese and Swedish  
delegations -**

With an increasing amount of plastic waste in the environment, in particular in the oceans, marine plastic litter has become an issue of global concern. It was debated at the meetings of the UN Environmental Assembly in 2015, 2017 and 2019. Like-minded countries and the Commission have worked closely together since 2019 to foster support for a legally binding international agreement. Today, more and more countries are campaigning for a binding global agreement to combat marine litter and plastic waste in the environment.

On 1 and 2 September 2021, the governments of Ecuador, Germany, Ghana and Vietnam co-convened a Ministerial Conference on Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution with support from the Secretariat of the UN Environment Programme. The conference took place at the headquarters of the World Trade Organization in Geneva. The aims and scope of the conference were to build momentum and political will in the lead-up to UNEA 5.2 in February 2022 and to provide a platform for all calls for collective action at global level.

Around 150 delegates attended the conference at the WTO building in person, and more than 800 followed the discussions online. In total, more than 1 000 representatives from 140 countries and numerous non-governmental organisations, including representatives from the European Commission, took part in this hybrid meeting. Delegates engaged in a high-level dialogue where they outlined their efforts to combat marine litter and plastic pollution. Many used this opportunity to underscore the urgency of combatting this challenge and the need to fill gaps in the existing governance framework at global level.

Delegates also discussed a ministerial statement drawn up by the co-conveners, which includes, but is not limited to, coordinated actions to address the negative impacts of plastic along its whole life cycle and calls on UNEA to establish an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) for a new global agreement on plastics. To date, around 29 countries and the EU have already endorsed the ministerial statement.

Peru and Rwanda also presented a first draft of a UN resolution to pave the way for a legally binding agreement on marine litter and plastics. This draft is intended to serve as a starting point for negotiations on a global agreement at UN level in February 2022. It will be presented at the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Subcommittee meeting in Nairobi at the end of October.

Due to the large amount of positive feedback from a global audience, covering three quarters of UNEP member states, Germany and the other co-conveners consider the conference a resounding success. It provided the crucial step and created momentum for initiating formal negotiations on marine litter and plastics after UNEA 5.2.

To further strengthen these efforts, it is important that the European Commission and the Member States:

- obtain approval for the Ministerial Statement and a legally binding global agreement on marine litter and plastic pollution by reaching out to other countries,
- discuss and seek support for the draft resolution of Rwanda and Peru,
- continue with outreach activities and coordinated actions to gain support for the establishment of an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) at UNEA 5.2 and to render any support needed for the work of the INC.

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