**QUNO Intervention**

**TESS Meeting on Plastics Pollution and Marine Litter**

***March 10, 2022***

**The Quaker United Nations Office** thanks the IDP workstream facilitators and co-coordinators for convening this timely discussion, and expresses its special thanks to Carolyn Deere, Director of the Forum on Trade, Environment, & the SDGs for inviting us to participate today.

The international momentum and action around issues of plastics pollution and marine plastics litter is strong. Last week, we witnessed a historical moment at the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-5), as Heads of State, Ministers of environment and other representatives from 175 nations agreed on a resolution towards reaching a legally binding global plastic instrument, which will address the entire lifecycle of plastic products – from production to design to disposal – by 2024 and enshrining the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.

QUNO’s 75 years of experience as a trusted presence at the multi-lateral level facilitated our role as one of only two NGO’s accorded observer status at the TESSD, and now at IDP. We provide a safe space for quiet diplomacy meetings where delegates engage and share perspectives on difficult issues. We have the capacity to host dialogue and provide briefing papers on various areas of interest being discussed at the IDP [perhaps this will assist the IDP in its workstream #3, as outlined in the work plan 2022]. Last year, on the occasion of the Trade and Environment week, QUNO moderated a side-event entitled: “Humanizing the WTO: Seeking a Sustainable, Just, and Integrative Trade Agenda.” During this gathering, panelists shared different perspectives and answered questions on how to make WTO work more impactful, durable, and accountable to the human impacts of trade (in its various levels and dimensions).

Looking at the MC12 Ministerial Statement On Plastic Pollution And Environmentally Sustainable Plastics Trade, we are pleased to see members’ commitments to addressing the trade-related capacity building and technical assistance needs of developing members, in particular least developed members and vulnerable Small Island Developing States and their MSMEs (Section 3, para 2.) in their efforts to obtain access to environmentally sustainable waste management technologies, expand their trade in environmentally sustainable and effective substitutes; and strengthen the ability to transition towards a circular plastics economy ( consider the 5-R model: reduce reuse, recycle, repair, and replace); among others. While these assistance mechanisms and collaboration modalities may bring tangible benefits to our collective capacity to confront the marine litter and plastics pollution challenge, they must be implemented through national policy mechanisms that are informed by human impact assessments, and involving full participation – throughout the planning, decision-making, and implementation process – of affected sectors and impacted communities.  As we join hands to find sustainable solutions to plastic pollution, we must ensure this also helps address the marginalization of women in the economy. As Dr Okonjo-Iweala, DG of the WTO has observed: “Narrowing gender gaps in trade and the wider economy is not just the morally right thing to do, it is the smart economic thing to do.”

We must coordinate our efforts to address the trade-related aspects of the plastics pollution and marine litter challenge through a granular perspective, which takes into account the human impacts of policies that lie at the juncture of trade and environment and provide developing members and LDCs (including SIDS) with just transition ideas and redress mechanisms, as well as finance for their transition towards a circular plastics economy.

AS UNEP figures suggest, A shift to a circular economy can reduce the volume of plastics entering oceans by over 80 per cent by 2040; reduce virgin plastic production by 55 per cent; save governments US$70 billion by 2040; reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25 per cent; and create 700,000 additional jobs – mainly in the global south.[[1]](#footnote-1)

We thank you for inviting us to this important dialogue and look forward to collaborating with you towards advancing this crucial agenda.

1. UNEP, “Policy options to eliminate additional marine plastic litter by 2050 under the G20 Osaka Blue Ocean Vision: an International Resource Panel Think Tank Piece,” *United Nations Environmental Programme* (2021), <https://www.resourcepanel.org/reports/policy-options-eliminate-additional-marine-plastic-litter> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)