

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen!

First of all, I would like to thank Ecuador, Germany, Ghana and Vietnam for their joint effort in organising and preparing this Conference and keeping up the momentum and the political will during these challenging times.

Litter and plastic in the sea is our growing concern. Urgent action is needed to stop the continuing damage to our oceans and seas. It is a global challenge and we cannot fight this alone. We have to act together and the new global instrument to address marine litter and plastic pollution is an appropriate tool for that.

Estonia is a small country at the coast of the Baltic Sea and yet we find more litter from our coasts than anywhere else in the region. In fact, that is the true nature of this problem for us. We have done a lot in Estonia to improve the land based waste management, both nationally and in cooperation with our neighbours, but unfortunately we don't see results yet. We are missing a common vision, goals and objectives at the global level to act coherently, timely and decisively. We need specific targets to guide our national efforts and regional cooperation.

From my point of view, the marine plastic pollution has silently become our new crisis. Plastic pollution threatens the marine environment and aquatic ecosystems, and is therefore the global priority. Marine pollutants must be dealt with at source and approached horizontally across all relevant sectors that impact on the marine environment. Circular economy is one of the main pathways towards this goal.

We clearly see the need for a governance framework to address marine plastic pollution. Currently we have a very fragmented institutional landscape that hinders to effectively tackle the problem. In UNEA 4, we agreed that action is needed on plastics at global level. A global agreement on marine plastic pollution has been under discussion for some time and I believe we need to give this treaty our full support. Identification of the main sources of litter, measures to reduce it and coordination with all relevant sectors is needed. There are sufficient studies to identify all necessary issues by IMO and also by UNEA and we can put our effort in supporting the implementation of these studies. Therefore, we call for the establishment of an International Negotiating Committee and launch negotiations on a global agreement on plastics and marine litter at UNEA 5.2.

Having said that, Estonia gives its full support to the proposed ministerial statement of this conference. We know that no country can adequately address the various aspects of marine plastic pollution alone and we are ready to fully commit to establishing a framework for international collaboration and cooperation. We look forward to doing so during UNEA 5.2.

Thank you!

Tõnis Mölder

Estonian Minister of the Environment