

Thank you mr. Chair,

On behalf of the NGO Major Group, let me start noting that in Sept. 2010, the General Assembly proclaimed the right to clean water and sanitation a fundamental human right without which no other rights can be fulfilled, thus affirming that, also from that angle, we are talking here about a common good essential to a good quality of life.

Now waste is a very broad issue, ranging from toxic, chemical and hazardous e-waste and nuclear waste on which we should realize and enforce a ban, to edible, nutritious and even delicious food waste, be it as post harvest losses due to a lack of infrastructure and storage – or the losses associated with the way consumption takes place in the western world where shocking amounts of food are simply thrown away.

But regardless of what kind of waste we are discussing, our response should be in essence the same: we should work on the transition to closing materials and nutrient cycles to a zero waste economy. This paradigm shift means that waste management is in fact an indicator of failed materials cycles. In closing those cycles, regional models and approaches should be taken, as low- and middle-income countries deserve more than an imperfect copy of a non-working solid waste paradigm. In closing those cycles, more data collection and analyses and more political commitment to waste management and the enforcement of relevant legislation is necessary, including mandatory public dissemination of knowledge of health and environmental risks. In closing those cycles, extended producer responsibility and accountability must be ensured.

But closing the materials and nutrient cycles in future production and consumption is not enough. There is already an awful lot of waste that urgently needs to be cleaned up. Shipbreaking is a case in point for which, on an international scale, obligatory and clearer guidelines are needed, taking into account not only environmental aspects, but also a whole range of social and worker's conditions issues. Another pressing example is, as the distinguished delegates of the EU, Chile and Bolivia already mentioned, the plastics in the oceans which threaten eco-systems and cause great harm to marine wildlife – birds, marine mammals, turtles, fish. The fact that the oceans are not part of national territories should not mean that countries take no action, it should mean that they take joint action.