



Press Release

Appeal to Swiss Parliament to take a leading role in securing a treaty to prevent plastic pollution

Geneva/Wädenswil, 16th September 2020: During the current autumn session, eleven Swiss organisations, representing 350,000 members and supporters, and concerned about the increasing impact of plastics and microplastics on the Swiss environment and human population, have urged members of Swiss Parliament and Government to take a more proactive stance in preventing plastic pollution and the need for assuring an effective global treaty.

During this year two important Swiss reports on microplastics have been released, a scientific study this year concluded that [microplastics are present in large quantities in snow in the Swiss Alps and in the Arctic](#), while another report on [plastic in the Swiss environment](#), demonstrates that up to 14,000 tonnes of plastic end up in our soil and waters every year. It is increasingly clear this is not purely a marine issue and the growing number will have an increased impact on our agriculture, our pristine countryside and our lakes and rivers - as well as on human and animal health.

Antoinette Vermilye, co-founder of the Gallifrey Foundation, says: "I am deeply concerned that the increasing reliance of plastic packaging and single use plastics is exposing citizens to unhealthy chemicals and additives (endocrine disrupters) inherent in plastics and bioplastics. These chemicals affect our hormones and have been scientifically linked to reproductive disorders, particularly infertility, obesity, diabetes and certain cancers. Switzerland has a chance to take the lead in ensuring the safety of its current and future populations and the health of the planet".

Fabienne McLellan, Co-Director International Relations at OceanCare adds : "There is hardly any place left on the planet where we don't witness the devastating impacts of our plastic legacy and single-use plastic footprint. The problem is far too big to be resolved by half-hearted, voluntary measures and to leave it up to the private sector to self-regulate. Also, we cannot recycle our way out of this problem. Switzerland has the opportunity to take a leading role in helping build an ambitious, visionary global framework to stop plastic pollution. I hope that the parliamentarians will step forward and request that urgent, ambitious, and global action is taken to address plastic across its lifecycle".

Andrés Del Castillo, Senior Attorney at the Center for International Environmental Law concludes: "Plastic pollution is one of the greatest human-made threats our planet is currently facing, and it's crystal (not plastic) clear that it is a growing concern for the Swiss population too, in addition to climate change and the decline of biodiversity. Plastic proliferation heavily contributes to global greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. Legal coherence and complementarity at the local, national and global level are necessary because you can't solve



the problem of climate change and biodiversity loss without tackling the problem of the full lifecycle of plastics”.

These groups are calling on the Swiss Parliament and Government to demonstrate its global leadership on this major concern of our time in the run-up to the fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA5) scheduled to take place in February 2021 and are encouraging them to pursue a new global legally binding agreement to tackle plastic pollution leveraging their expertise in multilateral cooperation and coordination to a productive outcome on this issue.

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Further information and links:

- Open letter to Members of the Swiss National Council and Council of States
- Thought Starter : « Convention on Plastic Pollution : Toward a new global global agreement to address plastic pollution » by EIA, CIEL, GAIA and BFFP
- Infographic “the case for a global plastic convention” by EIA

CIEL

The Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) is a non-profit organization with offices in Geneva and Washington D.C. CIEL has used the power of law to protect the environment, promote human rights, and ensure a just and sustainable society. CIEL’s team of attorneys, policy experts, and support staff works across three program areas: Climate & Energy, Environmental Health, and People, Land, & Resources.

The Gallifrey Foundation

The Gallifrey Foundation is a marine conservation and social entrepreneurship organisation that practices venture philanthropy and seeks to identify collaborative opportunities to tackle the most pressing ocean conservation issues facing us today. One of its main focuses is on the impacts of plastic pollution throughout its life on human health, the environment and social injustice.

OceanCare

OceanCare is a Swiss non-profit organisation. It was founded in 1989 and has a strong commitment to realistic and cooperative initiatives. The organisation works at national and international level in the areas of marine pollution, environmental changes, fisheries, whaling, sealing, captivity of marine mammals and public education. OceanCare holds Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) and is a partner of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), and the UNEP/CMS Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS) and UNEP/MAP. OceanCare has also been accredited as a Major Group to the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), which is the governing body of UNEP and is a part of the UNEP Global Partnership on Marine Litter.