

ANALYSIS OF STATEMENT AT INC1 BY STATE SECRETARY OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM OF MONGOLIA

Highlighted sentences are extracts from the statement (in order of appearance). The color-coding indicates how relevant Ecosoum considers each position taken by the Ministry, based on the 'End Waste' Charter of principles endorsed by many organizations in Mongolia.



"Mongolia fully supports the development of international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution"

It is a great thing that the Mongolian government officially and fully supports the binding instrument. This position is consistent with **principle #16** of the 'End Waste' Charter. We hope that the Ministry will actively participate in the international negotiations and make sure that the content of the Global Treaty and instrument is relevant and consistent with the 'End Waste' Charter.



"The Constitution of Mongolia declares the citizen's right to live in a healthy and safe environment and to be protected from environmental pollution and loss of natural balance"

It is good to remind that Mongolian citizens are constitutionally entitled to a healthy and safe environment. It means that this right to a healthy and safe environment, free of pollution, is more important than any other consideration, including lower-ranking laws and private interests. It means that the government must adopt and enforce laws and regulations that effectively ensure this healthy environment, and effectively prevent any form of pollution. In this regards, decisions and actions of for-profit corporations that lead to creating pollution and degrading the environment are to be considered contrary to the Constitution, and thus actively prevented through strict national laws and binding EPR policies – as stated in **principle #6** of the 'End Waste' Charter.



"We set a goal to increase the amount of recycled waste to 30 percent in 2025 and 40 percent in 2030"

Progressively increasing the waste recycling rate is obviously a relevant goal if it avoids waste being littered in the environment or dumped in a landfill. However, we are concerned that the only quantitative objective mentioned by the Ministry in its statement at INC1 concerns *recycling*, while there is no mention at all of *reducing* nor *reusing*. According to the fundamental 3R rule reminded in **principle #8** of the 'End Waste' Charter, the paramount goals to solve the waste crisis should be firstly to reduce waste generation at the source, then secondly to reuse whatever waste is generated. Recycling only comes third for waste that really can't be avoided nor reused. This paramount goal should appear in the next INC statements and be effectively adopted by the Mongolian government in its fight against waste.



"The Ministry of Environment and Tourism of Mongolia is working to create comprehensive waste management"

It is a good thing that the Ministry envisions to set up a *comprehensive* waste management system for Mongolia, rather than addressing each segment of the waste management chain separately. We hope that the Ministry will thus draw the right conclusions from this position and take adequate measures and actions to ensure this *comprehensiveness*. In line with **principle #7** of the 'End Waste' Charter, setting up comprehensive waste management necessarily means considering it as a public service (like health or education), even if part of the waste management chain is operated by the private sector. A market-based approach can only be insufficient to reach comprehensive waste management: audacious and strict policies are necessary to drive the system as a whole.



"[The Ministry of Environment and Tourism of Mongolia is working to] increase waste recycling"

Here again, as stated in **principle #9** of the 'End Waste' Charter, increasing waste recycling is a relevant objective; but this goal is really relevant only if it is integrated into a broader plan that primarily focuses on reducing and reusing. In addition, in line with **principle #10** of the 'End Waste' Charter, the Ministry should make a clear difference (which should be reflected in national laws) between *effective recycling* and *downcycling*: while true *recycling* contributes to closing the loop of the circular economy, *downcycling* does not (it only adds intermediary stages to the linear production-consumption-disposal chain). Therefore, the Ministry should be careful to increase *actual recycling*, and make sure that industries that currently practice *downcycling* progressively shift to *effective recycling*.



"[The Ministry of Environment and Tourism of Mongolia is working to] introduce waste-to-energy technologies"

This part of the statement is the most concerning and problematic. As explained in **principle #11** of the 'End Waste' Charter, it is scientifically proven that waste incineration, including "waste-to-energy" technologies, creates much more problems than it solves. Incineration emits substances that are extremely toxic for human health, and have terrible impacts on ecosystems and the climate. Incineration not only disincentivizes reduction of waste generation (incinerators require lots of waste to be economically viable) but it also competes with local recyclers (incinerators specifically need a lot of plastic to burn well, which disincentivizes sorting and recycling). Waste-to-energy facilities are extremely expensive, in terms of both upfront investments and running costs: it is one of the most expensive – and one of the least efficient – ways to produce electricity. All in all, waste incineration should never be accepted in Mongolia. Therefore, it is essential that the Ministry reconsiders this objective and comes up with alternative solutions.



"We have to implement measures that are based on the national circumstances of each country"

As stated in **principle #5** of the 'End Waste' Charter, it is indeed very important to take the national circumstances and local context into consideration when planning waste management. It means that the Ministry should beware of blindly replicating waste management systems from abroad or of basing all its hope on the introduction of advanced technologies from other countries. If efforts are put on implementing adequate regulations that tend to reduce waste generation and enable effective reusing and recycling, proper waste management is definitely possible with the technologies currently available in Mongolia.



"We fully support the idea that the international legally binding instrument should cover the whole life cycle of plastics in a manner that promotes resource efficiency and a circular economy"

It is essential to keep in mind, as stated by the Ministry and reminded in **principles #1 and #6** of the 'End Waste' Charter, that the international instrument as well as Mongolian laws and policies should address the full life cycle of plastics, not just their end of life (reusing, recycling or landfilling), if it is to enable circular economy and decrease the pressure on natural resources. Ultimately, a life cycle approach always leads to the same conclusion: plastics are not only hard to manage as a waste, they are creating tremendous problems from the moment they are produced. Therefore, relevant policies should focus not only on downstream plastic waste management but also on upstream plastic waste production and usage. As such, relevant policies – such as strict ban on single-use disposable plastics (as stated in **principle #14** of the 'End Waste' Charter) and standardization of packaging (as stated in **principle #15** of the 'End Waste' Charter) – should tend to reducing and regulating plastic usage in the first place, to enable true circular economy.

CONCLUSION

The participation of the Mongolian government in the intergovernmental negotiation process is certainly auspicious, and the statement of the Ministry in INC1 does include appropriate goals and relevant positions.

However, despite the positive parts of the statement, some aspects of it are very concerning. In fact, besides general claims about seeking to protect the environment, aiming for a comprehensive waste management system, or supporting the idea of a full life cycle approach, the statement falls short of suggesting actual measures or setting clear goals to this end.

The Ministry does set a quantitative objective for recycling rate, but the words “reducing” and “reusing” are totally absent from the statement, although these objectives should be considered a priority. We can’t find any mention of EPR policies nor of key measures such as ban on single-use plastic and standardization of packaging, despite the fact that such measures are unarguably of paramount importance. Even more worrying is the fact that the Ministry seems willing to introduce waste-to-energy technologies in Mongolia, although it is scientifically undeniable that these technologies come with such negative and counter-productive effects that they are definitely not to be recommended.

In conclusion, the Mongolian government needs to review its positions on these concerning aspects of its national-level waste-related goals and agenda. It is crucial that the Ministry effectively takes into account the principles of the ‘End Waste’ Charter when designing its policies to solve the waste crisis. We hope that the next statement of the Ministry at INC2 will reflect the constructive criticism expressed in this analysis.

**STATEMENT BY STATE SECRETARY OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT
AND TOURISM OF MONGOLIA
H.E. MR. BATTULGA ERKHEMBAYAR**

**1ST SESSION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE
TO DEVELOP AN INTERNATIONAL LEGALLY BINDING INSTRUMENT ON
PLASTIC POLLUTION, INCLUDING IN THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT**

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

Mr. Chairman, first of all, I would like to congratulate you for being elected as chair of INC. We look forward to your able leadership.

Our delegation greatly appreciates the Government of Uruguay for hosting this meeting and we all enjoy staying in beautiful city of Punta del Este.

We also very grateful to the UNEP Secretariat for successful organization of this INC-1 meeting.

Mongolia fully supports the development of international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including the marine environment.

The Constitution of Mongolia declares the citizen's right to live in a healthy and safe environment and to be protected from environmental pollution and loss of natural balance. In this regard, we set a goal to increase the amount of recycled waste to 30 percent in 2025 and 40 percent in 2030 in the Vision-2050 long-term development policy.

The Ministry of Environment and Tourism of Mongolia is working to create comprehensive waste management, increase waste recycling, and introduce waste-to-energy technologies. The total amount of solid waste in Mongolia reached 2.8 million tons in 2021, which is a 5.5 percent decrease from 2020.

We have to implement measures that are based on the national circumstances of each country. And we fully support the idea that the international legally binding instrument should cover the whole life cycle of plastics in a manner that promotes resource efficiency and a circular economy.

I would like to emphasize the importance of fostering innovation, encouraging actions by all stakeholders including the private sector, and promoting cooperation at the global, regional, national, and local levels.

Thank you for your attention. I wish you a successful session.