



scientific and technological achievements, the fourth industrial revolution, digital transformation, information technology, remote sensing technology and modern technology in management, monitoring, supervision and surveillance environmental newspaper; Promote the provision of online public services for environmental administrative procedures. Promote the application of solid waste treatment technologies, prioritizing advanced, modern and environmentally friendly technologies, energy recovery, reuse, recycling and treatment of solid waste and hazardous waste in a synchronous and effective manner, without causing environmental pollution, reducing the amount of solid waste treated by direct landfill.

International cooperation on environmental protection: Actively participate in negotiations and shape international commitments on environmental issues, climate change, biodiversity, and plastic waste; Organize the implementation of international treaties and international commitments in the field of environment of which Vietnam is a member; Promote the implementation of cooperation agreements, technical assistance, capacity building, technology transfer and international projects on environmental protection. Strengthen and advocate for cooperation with bilateral and multilateral partners, international financial institutions, international organizations... to support resources (financial, technical, technological, capacity) to implement COP26, sustainable development goals and green transition.

With the above goals, tasks, and solutions, the National Environmental Protection Plan for the period 2021-2030, with a vision toward 2050, includes the main contents to contribute to the implementation of the National Strategy on Environmental Protection to 2030, vision to 2050 and the Law on Environmental Protection in 2020. At the same time, the Plan also includes content on orientation of spatial distribution, zoning, environmental quality management, and conservation of nature and biodiversity, waste management, environmental monitoring and warning in defined territories to protect the environment, serving the country's sustainable development goals for a specified period as prescribed in the Law on Environmental Protection 2020 ■

In the context of plastic pollution becoming increasingly serious and becoming one of the global environmental crises, in 2022, United Nations member countries agreed to negotiate to develop a binding legal instrument to end plastic pollution. The fourth conference of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument (the Agreement) on plastic pollution (INC-4 Conference) took place from April 21st to 30th, 2024 in Ottawa, Canada, following the previous Conferences. INC-1 in 2022 and INC-2 and INC-3 in 2023, where a number of important outcomes were achieved towards concluding negotiations and possibly adopting a global agreement on plastic pollution by the end of 2024 to respond to the above crisis.

SOME IMPORTANT NEGOTIATION CONTENTS AND RESULTS

The INC-4 Conference marked the first time countries officially negotiated on the basis of revised draft No.0 of the Agreement with the following contents: managing plastic products along the entire life cycle of plastic; financial mechanisms and capacity building, technology transfer; national plan, implementation and compliance, progress report, evaluation, periodic progress monitoring, international cooperation, information exchange, awareness raising, stakeholder participation... The discussion focuses on the following issues:

Regarding primary polymer plastics: This is a controversial issue and shows a large division in the views of countries. Some petroleum oil producing countries such as Russia, China, India, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Malaysia, Kazakhstan... (about 20 countries) proposed not to stipulate this content in the Agreement. While in the meantime, developed countries proposed to include mandatory regulations on primary polymer plastics in the Agreement and called for measures to control the production and consumption of sustainable plastics throughout the life cycle of plastics. Vietnam also supports not including regulations on primary plastic management in the document and suggests compliance must be carried out according to each country's capacity.

Chemicals and polymers of concern: Developed countries propose globally binding provisions (as opposed to nationally determined measures) to control or regulate the use of chemicals, group of chemicals and polymers, through the list set out in the annexes and implemented through domestic measures and reflected in national plans. A group of countries proposed to include two lists in an annex, which would differentiate between chemicals in plastics that should be banned or removed and those that should be avoided and minimized, and propose criteria for identifying chemicals of concern.

Regarding the issue of microplastics: This is also an issue on which countries have many different views. Many countries such as India, countries of European Unions, United Arab Emirates, South Korea, and Thailand believe that this content has been mentioned in other sections such as plastic emissions, removal and suggest not regulating it. This content



Negotiation results at the Fourth Conference on global agreement on plastic pollution

LÊ NGỌC TUẤN

Department of International Cooperation,
Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment

is in the Agreement. A group of countries including Kenya and the Philippines proposed asking the parties to “take effective measures to promote research on the scale and scope of leakage of microplastics and nanoplastics throughout the entire life cycle of plastics and their impacts on all ecosystems, biodiversity, food chains, and human health”, and proposes measures to promote transparency and reduce emissions of intentionally added microplastics and unintentionally released microplastics; establish regional centers to monitor and report on microplastic leakage and dispersion, and establish a dedicated fund to provide resources to promote research on this issue.

Extended producer responsibility (EPR): The INC-4 Conference discussed 3 options: (1) there is no regulation on this issue in the Agreement’s documents; (2) encourage application according to each country’s conditions; (3) Member States should ensure all producers are part of the EPR scheme. Basically, countries support the introduction of EPR to reduce plastic pollution, in which developed countries (USA, Norway...) propose to establish a binding EPR mechanism with a common set of rules for uniform application. Countries such as Russia, China, India, Thailand, Korea, Malaysia or other countries that are developing or have not applied the EPR mechanism... suggest to establish an EPR mechanism to implement producer responsibility for its products, but it needs to be implemented flexibly, based on the circumstances and capacity of each country; some countries support voluntary EPR programs or explicitly remove the EPR provisions.

The INC-4 Conference drafted the EPR into 02 options: (1) no regulations on this issue; (2) each member is required or encouraged to establish an EPR implementation program/system. Currently, member countries have added necessary and specific contents and groups of issues on reducing, reusing, recycling and treating plastic waste, preventing and combating plastic waste pollution, and the process of plastic waste. Fair transition, traceability, accountability, enhanced regional and global cooperation in implementing EPR programs for further discussion and completion at the next INC-5 Conference.



▲ Overview of the INC-4 Conference held in Ottawa, Canada

Emission and disposal of plastic during the life cycle of plastic: In draft No.0, the content of plastic emission and disposal according to the life cycle offers 05 options, including: (1) member countries need to implement the following measures: to prevent and control plastic emissions, prevent the emission and disposal of plastic products along the life cycle; (2) Member States shall prevent and eliminate the release and disposal of plastic polymers, plastics, including microplastics and plastic products throughout their life cycle into the environment from sources identified in the Annex E; (3) Member States should take the necessary measures to regulate the emission and disposal of plastics, including microplastics, throughout their environmental life cycle as determined by national plans and based on circumstances and capabilities of the country; (4) Member States must take measures to prevent and control the release and disposal of plastic and microplastic waste into the environment from sources identified in Annex E; (5) Member States must manage and eliminate the loss and disposal of plastic products and product waste, including microplastic waste into the environment.



At the INC-4 Conference, basically the majority of countries, including the European Union, the United Kingdom, Samoa, Sri Lanka,... achieved high consensus on waste management content in the waste management plan in a strict direction from source to treatment; Unify the implementation of integrated waste management according to existing conventions and treaties (Basel Convention, Rotterdam). Developing countries emphasize the importance of financial and technological support based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. They specifically recommend prioritizing nationally determined voluntary measures outlined in the national plan; recommend controlling cross-border transport of plastic waste, noting the challenge posed by importing waste from other countries. Developed countries recommend measures across the plastic life cycle and value chain, developing a waste hierarchy.

At the end of the negotiation session, the content of emissions and disposal in the plastic life cycle was reduced into two proposed options for further discussion at the next meeting including: (1) Member States, depending on their national plans and based on their national circumstances and capacities, need to take measures to regulate, prevent, minimize, and eventually eliminate plastic emissions and plastic waste, including microplastics, into the environment throughout the plastic life cycle; (2) Member countries, according to national plans and based on circumstances and national capacity, should encourage or should take measures to regulate, prevent, reduce, and eventually eliminate plastic emissions and waste. Both of these options are still being discussed to add necessary content and groups of issues and be discussed in the next INC5 sessions.

Plastic waste management: In Draft No. 0, the content of plastic management has 04 options including: (1) member countries will implement effective measures to ensure plastic waste is safely managed and environmentally friendly in different stages of the life cycle. The measures taken to implement this provision shall be reflected in national plans to achieve nationally determined targets and minimum requirements based on harmonized indicators as set out in Part II, Annex F; (2) Member States shall implement safeguard measures for the environmentally sound management of plastic waste. Measures taken to implement this provision are encouraged to be reflected in national plans, aiming at achieving nationally determined targets and minimum requirements that have been developed basing on harmonized indicators as set out in Part II, Annex F; (3) Each Party should take effective measures to meet existing best practices for the safe and environmentally friendly collection, recycling and disposal of the minimum level, taking into account the relevant guidance, available waste management infrastructure and national priorities; (4) Each Party, in accordance with its national plan and based on national circumstances, capabilities and relevant national regulations, shall implement safe and environmentally sound waste management measures with the environment. Measures taken to implement this provision shall be reflected in the national plan.

At the INC-4 Conference, basically, most countries had high consensus on the content of waste management in the plan: strict waste management from source to treatment; Unify the implementation of integrated waste management according to existing conventions and treaties (Basel Convention, Rotterdam). For the group of developing countries, it is emphasized the importance of improving infrastructure, including financial and technological support on the basis of common but differentiated responsibilities; In particular, it is recommended that priority should be given to nationally determined voluntary measures outlined in the national plan. These countries also recommended controls on cross-border transport of plastic waste, noting the challenge posed by importing waste from other countries. Developed countries are calling for solutions throughout the plastic life cycle and value chain, developing a waste hierarchy.

Fishing gear management: In draft No. 0, the content of fishing gear management is a content in the plastic waste management section (section b, part II.9) with 3 options including: (1) no content regulations on this issue; (2) Member countries, according to their national plans and based on national circumstances and capabilities, must take or encourage the implementation of appropriate measures in terms of design, marking, tracing, and trace to prevent, reduce and eliminate lost, forgotten or discarded fishing gear at sea. The measures taken to implement this provision shall be reflected in the national plan; (3) Member States, depending on their circumstances and national capacities, should cooperate to take appropriate, effective measures for the disposal of fishing gear.

At the negotiation session, this content is still being discussed and there are still many conflicts because the exact content of fishing gear and scope of management has not been determined. Some countries state that fishing gear is not waste and is just lost tool. Many developed countries recommend strict management from the beginning of the watershed using a life cycle approach, labeling and tracing fishing gear. Developing countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia believe that life cycle management of fishing gear is very challenging and requires capacity building and guidance and support to be able to implement it. Some countries propose to move the content of fishing gear from the waste management section to the emissions section.



At the end of the negotiation session, the content of fishing gear management was separated into a separate section in the issues of obligations with 2 options continued to be proposed for discussion at the next session, including: (1) no regulation making fishing gear management a main content of core obligations; (2) Member States shall, according to their national plans and national circumstances and capabilities, take or encourage the implementation of appropriate measures for design, marking, tracing, and trace to prevent, reduce and eliminate lost, forgotten or discarded fishing gear at sea. Currently, necessary content and groups of issues have been added to this plan for further discussion and completion at the next INC-5 Conference.

Financing: Many developing countries in South America and small island states support the establishment of a new, specialized financing mechanism (e.g. Plastic Pollution Fund) to support developing countries. Meanwhile, developed countries such as the United States, Canada, Japan, European Union, Switzerland, United Kingdom... want to take advantage of current financial mechanisms such as ADB, World Bank, Global Environment Facility... ensures effectiveness and can be put into operation immediately to solve the currently relatively urgent problem of plastic pollution globally; Establishing a new fund does not guarantee additional budget resources. Although Vietnam, Indonesia and a number of other Asian countries support a new fund, they also believe that they should still take advantage of current financial mechanisms (including the GEF that is operating effectively), utilize existing administrative apparatus and financial resources to maximize resources, pending the establishment of a new mechanism.

Finance section also addresses the establishment of global plastic pollution charging methods, which would require polymer manufacturers to take responsibility for the pollution costs of all the plastic they produce. This fee can be used to fund environmentally friendly waste management and cleaning initiatives. The European Union supports the pollution fee plan. Many developing countries proposed not to stipulate this type of fee in the Agreement because many countries have regulated EPR and collecting plastic pollution fees would cause double payment, which may create investment barriers for businesses.

Capacity building, technical support and technology transfer: developing countries propose to have separate chapters on this content, ensuring developed countries support capacity building, technology and transfer technology in solving plastic waste and in research to have specific, feasible solutions suitable to real conditions. Meanwhile, developed countries only want shortened content. Some countries proposed adding specific mechanisms and policies for capacity building, technical support and sustainable and effective technology transfer, with an emphasis on promoting

innovation in the entire process of development, transfer, dissemination and especially access to new, environmentally friendly techniques and technologies. Some countries suggested emphasizing capacity building, technical assistance and technology transfer; clarify the need for coordination and cooperation with multilateral environmental agreements and other related initiatives to ensure effectiveness.

VIETNAM'S PARTICIPATION AND SOME KEY ISSUES

Vietnam has actively participated in discussion sessions according to Contact Groups and Sub-groups with a proactive and responsible spirit in the process of developing the draft Agreement in the spirit of closely following the Vietnamese viewpoints, guidelines, policies, laws, and international environmental treaties to which Vietnam is a member, in accordance with the conditions and level of socio-economic development of the country, strengthen mobilization and attraction of financial and technological resources to implement the Agreement.

During the discussion, the Delegation focused on the approved contents in the Negotiation Project related to supporting the life cycle approach of plastics on the basis of cooperation and sharing of benefits and obligations between Member States, placing national interests together with the goals of environmental protection and minimizing and ending plastic pollution, emphasize the importance of considering mandatory obligations to take into account the conditions and circumstances of each country, support the principles and viewpoints of countries with equivalent conditions in the region, propose technological and financial support and prioritize the implementation of mitigation towards ending plastic pollution according to the roadmap for developing countries; coordinate with the Philippines to include the content of responsibility for protecting the marine environment under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS 1982) in the Preamble of the draft Agreement.

To prepare for participating in negotiations at the INC-5 Conference and related events, in the coming time, Vietnam needs to implement a number of contents:

The current negotiation process has entered into the substance of the Agreement, therefore, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Ministries and branches participating in the Negotiation Working Committee need to carefully prepare negotiation plans, including: viewpoints, high options, options and acceptable limits to discuss at the upcoming negotiation sessions, while continuing to protect the options stated at the INC-4 Conference.



Relevant ministries and branches need to allocate enough resources to carry out assigned tasks; Responsible for negotiation contents in areas under management authority; Directly participate in negotiation sessions and technical meetings within the framework of the Agreement negotiations.

Send experts and members of the negotiating team to attend the meeting of 02 groups of technical experts to discuss, monitor and even participate in informal negotiations at this meeting.

Regarding procedures for concluding negotiations, the INC-5 Conference is the final negotiation conference for member countries to negotiate and develop the Agreement, therefore, the procedures are according to the provisions of the 2016 Law on International Treaties, the lead agency, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, needs to coordinate with ministries and branches to develop a plan to end the negotiations and submit it to the Prime Minister according to regulations before the INC-5 Conference and the member ministries of the Negotiation Working Group need to provide relevant content to prepare for the conclusion of the negotiations.

Regarding issues of concern, it is necessary to take policy impact assessments as soon as possible based on trend forecasts, especially for new contents such as: 40x40 target, plastic pollution fee.

Mobilizing the participation of relevant parties, at the INC-4 Conference, a number of negotiating delegations, in addition to the participation of Government agencies, also had the participation of experts and consultants representing Relevant associations in the plastic industry, research institutes, independent legal consultants for the negotiating team (such as Malaysia, Chile, China, Philippines...). Vietnam can also consider adding representatives from these aforementioned institutes/organisations to advise on related contents for the negotiating team.

Continue to organize consultations with relevant parties through technical workshops on the contents to be discussed at expert group meetings in Bangkok, Thailand, from August 24th – 28th, 2024; It is necessary to propose the main contents of the Agreement on the basis of the draft Comprehensive Agreement announced by the Intergovernmental Negotiation Committee in July 2024.

Step by step communicate the negotiation process and the content of the draft Global Agreement to people and businesses to gradually raise awareness of the serious impact caused by plastic pollution and change behavior from production to consumption and responsible disposal of plastic products, avoiding environmental pollution.

Strengthen international cooperation to assess the current situation of plastic pollution, promote plastic circulation models, and manage and treat plastic waste ■

Dong Nai river basin is the third largest river basin in the country, after the Mekong and Red - Thai Binh river systems, with water resources accounting for about 5.5% of the country's total water resources. Dong Nai river basin has a natural area of 36,530 km², within the administrative boundaries of 10 provinces and cities: Dong Nai, Binh Duong, Binh Phuoc, Tay Ninh, Ba Ria - Vung Tau, Dak Nong, Lam Dong, Long An, Binh Thuan provinces and Ho Chi Minh City. Dong Nai river basin is considered having great values, the most prominent of which is the value of water resources, the main source of supply for economic development activities, people's livelihood and regulating the climate of the whole region. This is one of 13 river basins in Viet Nam that must develop a general master plan for the river basin.

1. CHALLENGES FOR WATER RESOURCES IN THE DONG NAI RIVER BASIN

Water resources in the Dong Nai river basin are exploited and used to meet the purposes of domestic water use, agricultural and industrial production, electricity generation, thereby annually contributing about 35.2% of the country's GDP. Thanks to the abundant water resources, the river basin has additional values such as: forest resources, mineral resources, fisheries, hydroelectricity, eco-tourism... There are currently values that have been and are being exploited effectively, contributing to local socio-economic development. However, in recent years, water resources in the Dong Nai river basin are facing many challenges due to pressure on water exploitation and use, sharp decline in water amount in the dry season, water pollution, salinity intrusion and impacts of climate change, specifically:

(i) Water resources in the planned area are unevenly distributed in space and time. The total amount of water in the planned area is about 56.73 billion m³ (including surface water about 46.13 billion m³, underground water about 10.6 billion m³). Of which, the total amount of surface water in the flood season accounts for about 78% and in the dry season accounts for about 22% of the total annual flow. The average amount of water per capita in the dry season is about 797 m³/person, but access to water sources in many areas is still difficult, especially in high mountainous areas, remote areas and areas affected by saltwater intrusion, leading to local water shortages in some areas during the dry season.

(ii) There is no general master plan for the Dong Nai river basin, while the general master plan for river basins is one of the foundations for formulating and implementing sectoral master plans for exploiting and using water resources. On the other hand, a number of sectoral and local master plans for exploiting and using water resources have been and are being