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Overview and state-of-play of env-related discussions on plastics

(focus on regulatory measures)

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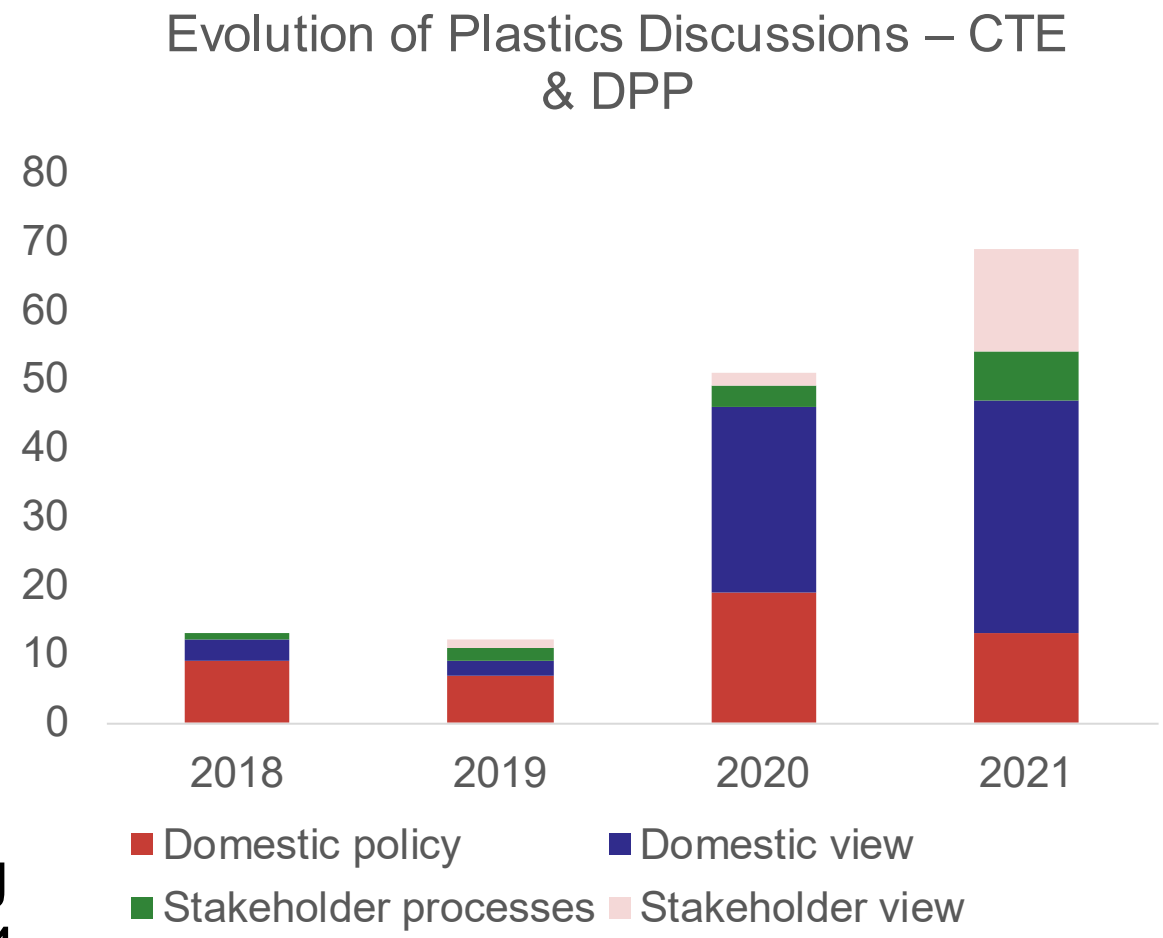
Overview of WTO (env-related) Discussions on Plastics

- Discussions on env and trade-related aspects of plastics ongoing since 1995…
  - E.g. Argentina (1995) transparency of plastics "waste handling" and "take-back" requirements
  - Malaysia (1998), on behalf of ASEAN – coherence between sustainability criteria and labelling applied to timber/paper and plastics
- … intensified significantly since 2018
- From 2020-mid-2021, a total of 132 interventions took place (in Dialogue and CTE) – 15 stakeholders
- At UNEA-5 (March 2022) – negotiations towards a new international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution by end 2024
  - Next neg meeting in Paris in May



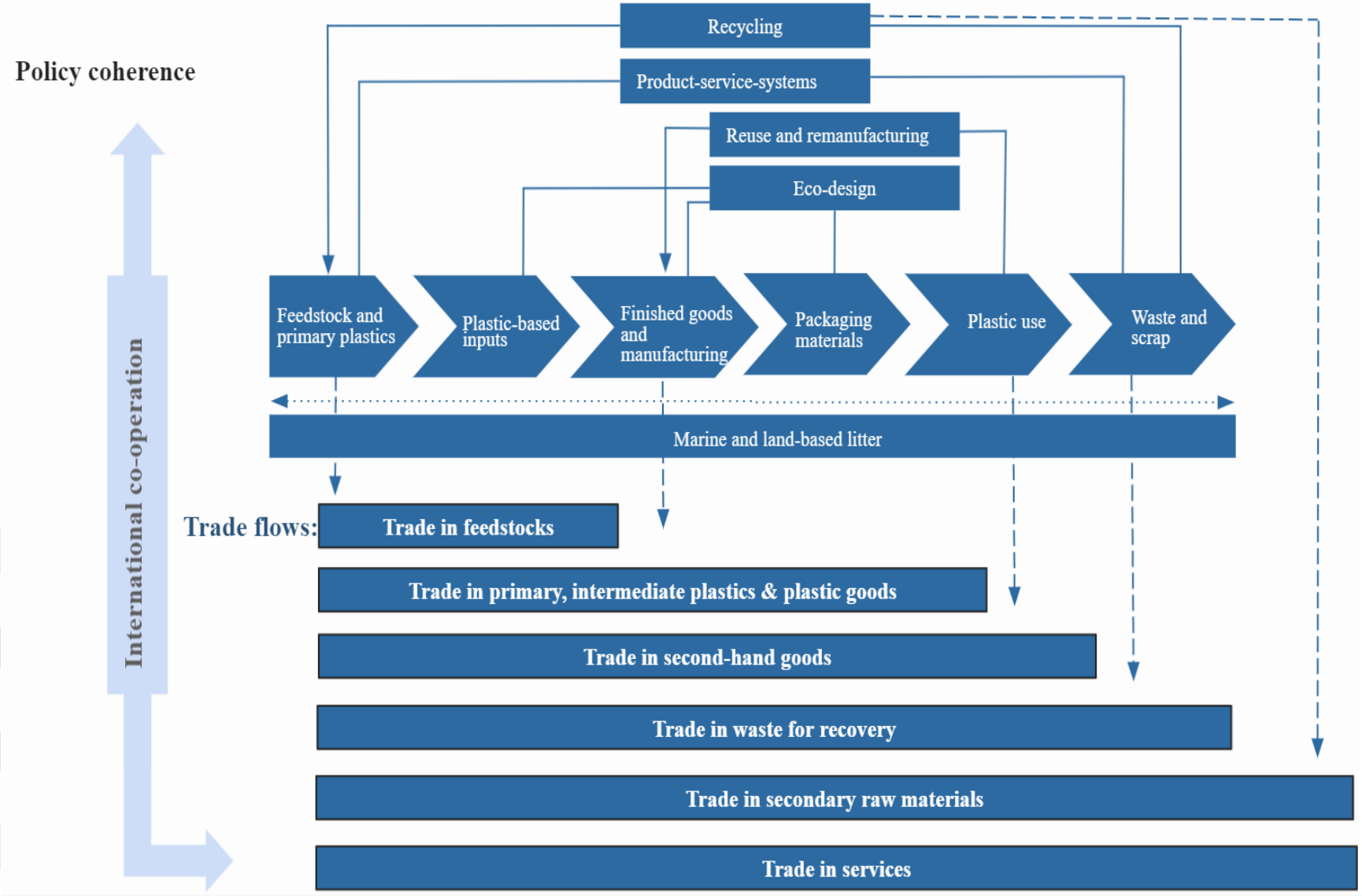
See Dialogue's 2021 Factual Report

Dialogue on Plastic Pollution and Environmentally Sustainable Plastics Trade

- Launched in November 2020
- **Coordinators**: Australia, Barbados, China, Ecuador, Fiji, Morocco
  - (+ the Philippines, UK and Colombia as facilitators)
- **Objectives**:
  - To explore how improved trade cooperation could contribute to efforts to reduce plastics pollution and transition to a more circular and environmentally sustainable global plastics economy
  - To complement existing international processes in other fora
- 4 plenary and 4 pre-plenary **meetings** in 2022 (+ 4 side-events and a Workshop)
- **75 co-sponsors**, representing 75%+ of trade in plastics
- **3 informal working groups**: (i) cross-cutting issues; (ii) promoting trade to tackle plastic pollution; and (iii) circularity and reduction to tackle plastic pollution / + two Surveys

Where does trade "fit" in plastics life-cycle?

Flowchart 1 – Plastic Life-Cycle Stages and Trade Flows



- **1.2 trillion annual trade (UNCTAD-TESS)**
- **"Hidden flows" – embedded + packaging**
- **Most trade occurs in primary forms**
- **Regulatory policies broadly concentrated in the mid- and downstream stages**

Dialogue website: https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/ppesp_e/ppesp_e.htm

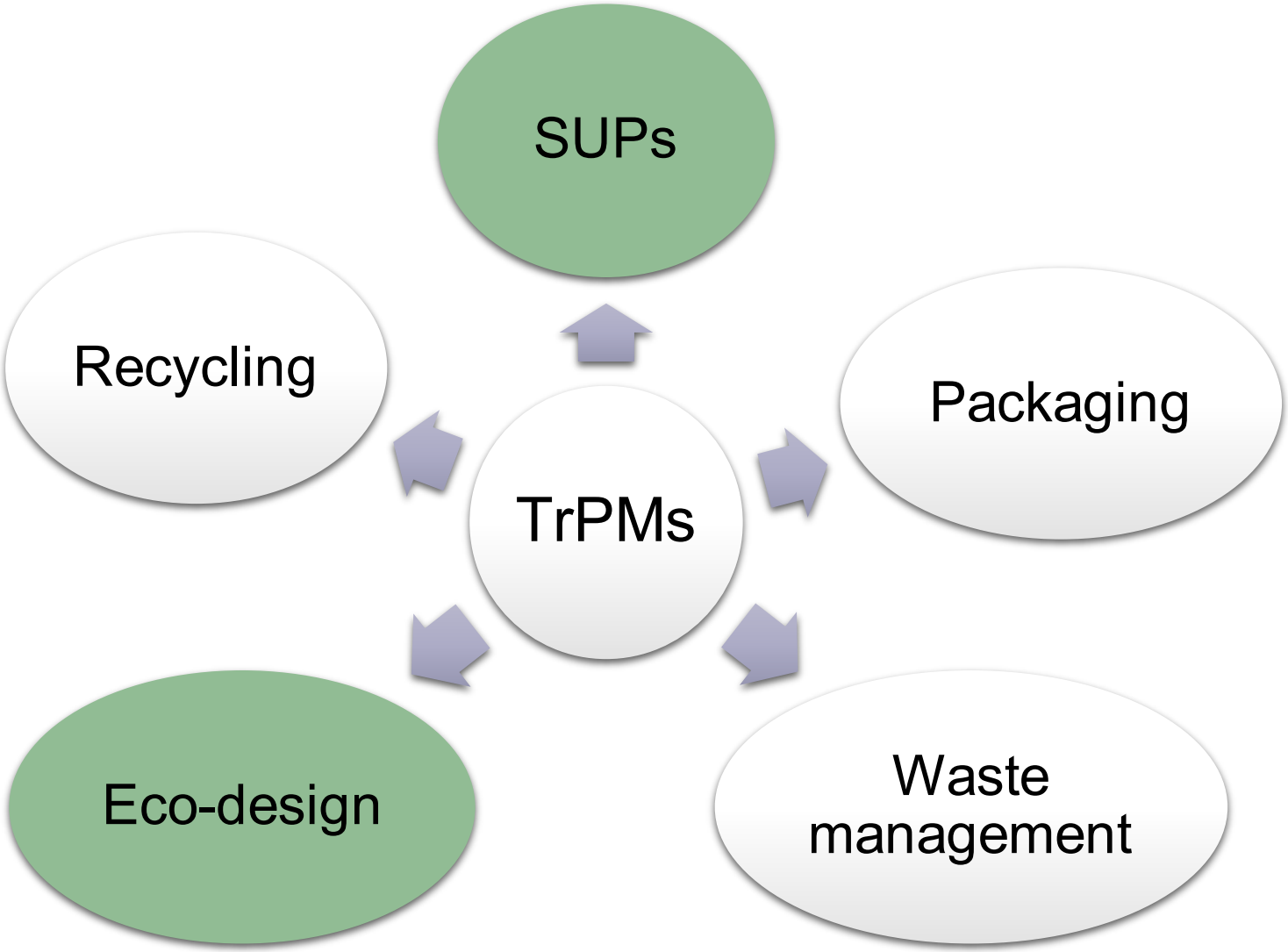
General numbers and state of play (TrPMs survey)

~280 TrPMs

64 Members

From all regions and mostly developing and LDCs (75%+, by member or measure)

What trends or commonalities in [reduction] TrPMs so far?



TrPMs on Single-use Plastics (SUP)

89 TrPMs

Main SUPs targeted

Commonalities

thickness of material (eg: < 50 microns)

usage (eg: purpose, capacity)

How do Members define “single-use plastic bags”?

Polymer input (eg: bio or polymer based)

End of life properties

1. Thickness of material ranges from:

- < 15 microns
- < 35 microns
- < 50 microns
- < 70 microns
- < 100 microns

2. Usage (e.g: purpose or capacity) includes:

- Designed to carry
  - purchased goods from a business
  - goods, materials or products
  - products and goods that are delivered to a consumer
- Capacity / volume / surface density of
  - less than 10 kilograms, > 53 metres
  - less than 25 litres
  - equal to or greater than 60 g/m²
- Designed for single use/short useful life or to be "reusable" or used > than:
  - 100 times

TrPMs on Eco-design

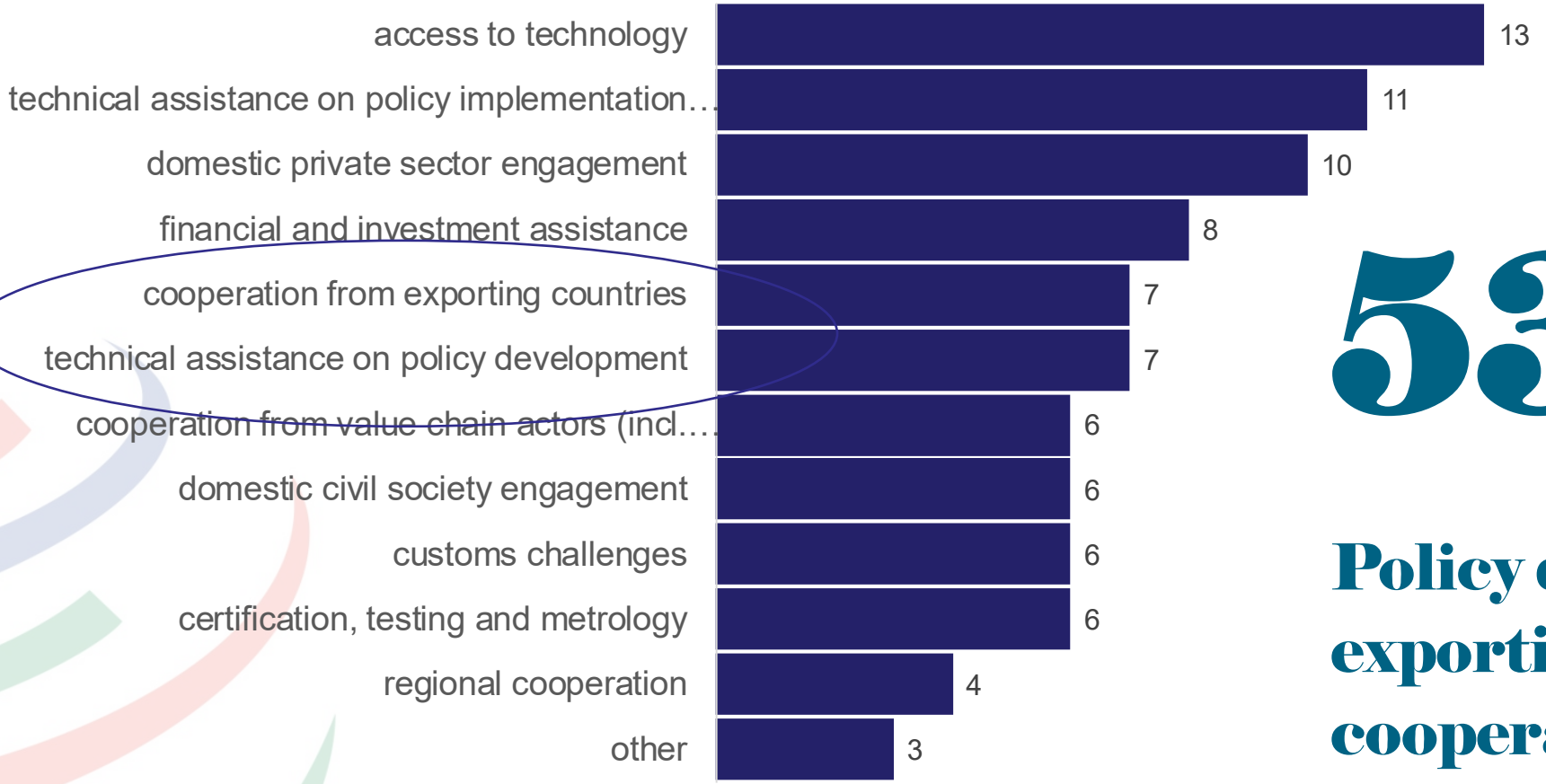
104 TrPMs

Types of eco-design TrPMs

- Requirements applicable to minimum thickness, (re)usability
- Minimum recycled content [*5-30%, different horizons e.g. 2030*] [incl. in tax form]
- Exclusion of certain components:
  - specific polymers,
  - microbeads [*e.g. 5 mm in size*],
  - features affecting recyclability [coloring, multilayer, multi-polymer],
  - toxic components/additives [medical waste]
- (voluntary) Guidelines for Design of Plastic-containing Products:
  - Requirements Restricting Excessive Packaging in Foods and Cosmetics
  - Requirement to introduce an "environmental variable" in product packaging design
  - requirements on eProducts design to enhance extraction of key components, marking of plastic parts

TrPMs on Eco-design

18 **Indicate challenges/needs**



53 **In total indicate challenges/needs**

Policy development and exporting country cooperation among 3 lowest

Dec 2022 Workshop on on sustainable and effective substitutes and alternatives for plastics (with UNCTAD)

Table 6: Products, base line materials and substitutes/alternatives

PRODUCT TYPE	BASE CASE	POTENTIAL SUBSTITUTES / ALTERNATIVES
Fishing nets	Nylon	Polypropylene, cotton, hemp
Beverage bottles	PET	Aluminium, glass, polypropylene
Beverage cups and food containers	EPs	Paper (cardboard), PLA, polypropylene, Banana/plantain leaf, coconut husk
Shopping bags	LDPE (single use)	LDPE (multiple use), jute, paper, cotton, hemp
Disposable utensils	Polypropylene	Bio-polypropylene, steel, wood
Food wrappers	PVC	Aluminium, PET, Bio-LDPE
Sachets	HDPE and PET	Aluminium wrap, PET
Beverage cartons	Multimaterial	PET, Glass
Clothing	Multimaterial	Cotton, linen, bamboo
Diapers	Multimaterial	Cotton, bamboo
Fishing gear	Durable plastic	Marine biodegradable and recyclable plastic
Cosmetics packaging	Plastic	Cellulosic fibre
Straws	Plastic	Wheat fibre, paper

See Dialogue's Report - INF/TE/IDP/RD/88/Rev.1

Workshop discussions

Trade-related challenges in using substitutes

- Lack of **coherence in national regulations** and differences in recycling processes
- Price-based restrictions (e.g. alternatives cost should be no more than 10% costlier).
- Lack of access to (cost-effective) sustainable alternatives
- **Lack of consumer confidence and education** about plastic waste
- Need for assistance [international cooperation] for developing countries to produce substitutes or alternatives – in particular those of export interest to some developing countries - supporting livelihoods in rural communities, including by generating employment for women.
- **Some plastic substitutes**, such as jute, were still subject to high tariffs in certain markets and also **faced non-tariff barriers related to certification**.
- An analysis shared of applied tariff rates revealed that substitutes were more expensive and faced higher tariffs than plastics
- Competing synthetic fibres faced lower costs of production, partly because of energy subsidies
- **International standards** applied to substitutes seemed to be much **less developed** than for plastics

What is next?

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Next meeting – 13 March (next Monday)

Workshop on "reduction" end of April

2021 Ministerial Statement calls for "concrete, pragmatic, and effective outcomes … at the latest by MC13"

By end 2024 – UN negotiations should conclude

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THANK YOU