



clear that these are important considerations for the ILBI. In this context, it is necessary that the concept of a circular economy as well as sustainable production and consumption be defined in a robust yet flexible manner.

How? There are several potential options through which the concept of the circular economy could be included within the ILBI. The first option would involve the explicit definition of a circular economy. There are several existing definitions, such as those used in States and regional organizations including the European Union, some Canadian provinces, some Australian states, Japan and United States' legal and regulatory systems, and these could be used as starting points in the development of a definition that reflects the needs and capacities of State and private sector actors across the development spectrum. An element of an explicit definition could be the design of materials and products in such a way that their value is maintained as high as possible and for as long as possible, and that harmful environmental impacts be minimized throughout the whole life cycle. This would mean considering, among other things, the choice of feedstock (renewable or not), pollution from usage, the risks of leakage into the environment, and end-of-life options as part of the definition ambit.

The second option would be an implicit definition of a circular economy in the ILBI. This option could allow for greater flexibility in the sense of allowing for the organic development of aspects of circularity in the plastic industry without the need for concerns over whether these activities would still be covered by the ILBI. In this option, the critical consideration would be identifying factors that inhibit greater circularity in the global plastics economy as well as ways in which international law and national action plans under the ILBI could act as drivers for change. Encouraging such questions may lead to materials substitution where a particular outcome cannot be guaranteed with a specific material, to making inherently linear products with a short lifespan from biodegradable plastics instead, to developing standards for sustainable polymers, and beyond. The ILBI using this option for the incorporation of circularity could foster smart design choices for a more circular economy by setting out commonly agreed design principles. These principles should build on the already well-known 12 principles for green and sustainable chemistry that encourage life cycle thinking and environmental trade-offs to be made at the early stages of making chemicals.

Finally, the third option could involve a combination of a flexible and dynamic definition of the circular economy in the ILBI that provides latitude for the use of the concept throughout the implementation of the ILBI. In this context, certain links should be made in an explicit way, for example those between the circular economy and national action plans, while others could be allowed to develop as appropriate based on legal, scientific and technical advances in the future.

What? As noted in UNEA resolution 5/14, there is an inherent link between circular economy in the plastics industry and sustainable consumption and production. The plastics industry is a major source of plastic pollution, which is a global environmental problem. The plastics industry is also a major consumer of fossil fuels, which are a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. The plastics industry is therefore a key sector for addressing both climate change and plastic pollution. The plastics industry is also a major source of microplastics, which are a growing concern for human health and the environment. The plastics industry is therefore a key sector for addressing both climate change and plastic pollution. The plastics industry is also a major consumer of fossil fuels, which are a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. The plastics industry is therefore a key sector for addressing both climate change and plastic pollution. The plastics industry is also a major source of microplastics, which are a growing concern for human health and the environment. The plastics industry is therefore a key sector for addressing both climate change and plastic pollution.



consumption criteria and targets, with the aim of fostering environmentally sound plastic recycling and entrenching the circular economy.

2. Plastics life-cycle focus

What? UNEP briefing note 11 in advance of INC-1 provides an outline of the phases of the plastics life-cycle, ranging from the upstream phase to the mid-stream phase and, ultimately, to the downstream phase and many aspects of the discussions at INC-2 included aspects of establishing the phases and the required laws and regulations for them. The information it contains is drawn from responses by nearly two dozen States to questions about the plastics life cycle and the legal and technical challenges experienced in efforts to regulate it. Through these responses, it is clear that a multiphase understanding of the plastics life

