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**UNOFFICIAL ROOM DOCUMENT<sup>1</sup>**

**PRESENTATION BY THE FORUM ON TRADE, ENVIRONMENT AND THE SDGS (TESS)**

**Understanding trade flows across the lifecycle of plastics:  
Possible amendments to the Harmonized System**

**IDP Workstreams Meeting – 18 March 2022**

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**DOCUMENT DE SÉANCE NON OFFICIEL<sup>1</sup>**

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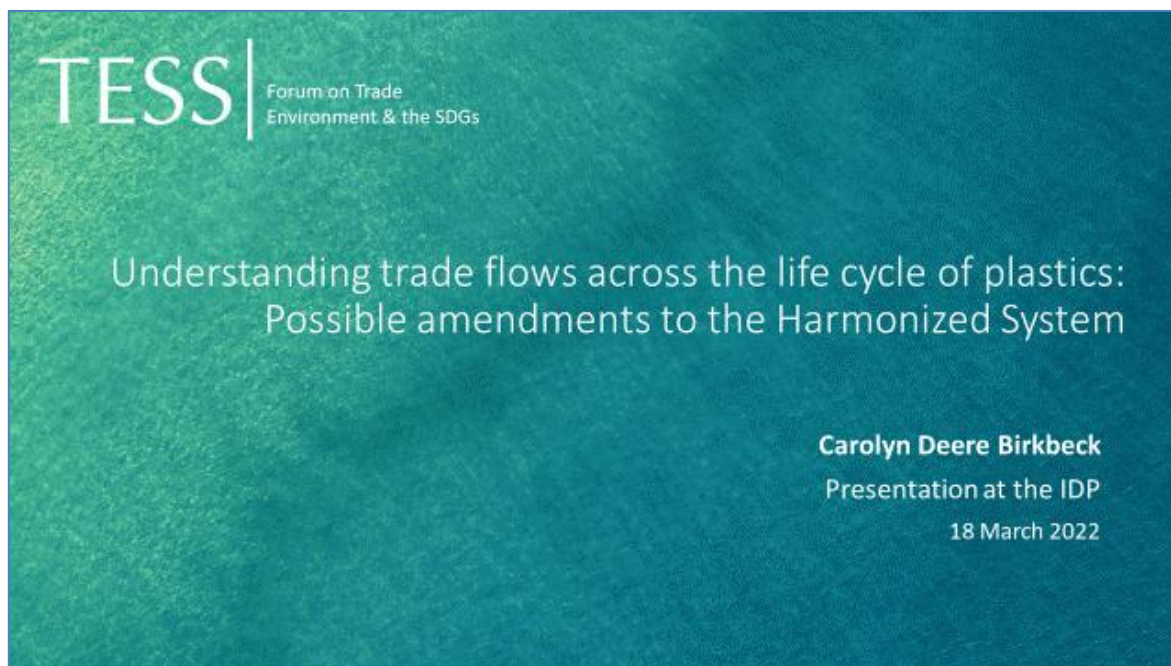
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## Recognition of the need to improve data and monitoring of trade flows relevant to plastic pollution

- IDP Ministerial Statement:
  - "improve the understanding of global trade in plastics, including flows of plastics embedded in internationally traded goods or associated with them (such as plastic packaging)."
  - "identify "actions needed to improve gathering of data on trade flows and supply chains, including by utilizing the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS Convention) of the World Customs Organization or other trade instruments or standards...and [to improve] the flow of information about the chemical and material characteristics of plastic products traded internationally."
- The 2019 'plastic waste amendments' to the Basel Convention spurred a request for the Basel Convention Secretariat to develop a draft proposal on amendments to the Harmonized System to enable governments to better track different kinds of trade in plastic waste and facilitate implementation of the Basel Convention.
- At the national and regional level, some governments have updated their trade classifications to enable them to better monitor and regulate trade in certain plastics and plastic products. Several countries are currently considering options for further amendments.

## Shortcomings of the existing HS classification in relation to information needs for tackling plastic pollution

- Insufficient differentiation of primary plastics by polymer type and by feedstock (e.g. fossil fuel feedstocks, bio-based feedstocks, and recycled feedstocks)
- Insufficient differentiation of POPs and other harmful chemical additives
- Gaps in the scope of products that are classified as plastics
- Varying detail on the share of plastics embedded in products
- Inadequate information on the material composition of plastic products and waste, including polymer types and the presence of harmful chemical substances of high environmental and health concern.
- Failure to capture plastic packaging that is an integral part of other traded products
- Inadequate classifications of plastic waste (including poor alignment with Basel Convention amendments)

Vaca Eyoaguine, C. and Deere Birbeck, C. (2022). Improving the classification, monitoring, and reporting of global trade flows across the life cycle of plastics: Options for potential amendments to the Harmonized System. TESS: Geneva.

## Recommendations for 2027 HS amendment cycle

<b>Feedstocks and additives</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Add specific HS codes for chemicals such as POPs and other harmful chemical additives used in plastics, starting with those controlled by the Stockholm or Rotterdam Conventions.</li> </ul>
<b>Plastics in primary forms</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create new HS subheadings to allow for greater disaggregation of primary polymer types, many of which are already identified in national legislation or regulatory frameworks.</li> <li>▪ Create new HS subheadings for the most commonly recycled primary polymers, such as recycled ethylene, propylene, and styrene polymers.</li> <li>▪ Amend Section Notes for Chapter 39 to guard against misclassification or disguise of illegal trade of plastic waste under subheadings for primary plastics</li> </ul>
<b>Intermediate and final manufactured plastic products</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create new HS subheadings that disaggregate a subset of intermediate and manufactured plastic products (i.e., that are particularly associated with plastic pollution) by a wider range of polymers as well as mixtures of polymers and materials.</li> <li>▪ Amend HS subheadings to incorporate specific information for plastic products that contain persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and other harmful chemical additives.</li> <li>▪ Amend and create HS subheadings to reveal information about "hidden" plastic packaging associated with trade in certain products (such as pre-packaged foods and beverages).</li> </ul>
<b>Plastic waste</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create new HS subheadings to differentiate plastics wastes by a greater number of polymer types and better align the HS classification with the annexes to the Basel Convention.</li> <li>▪ Amend the Section Notes for HS Chapter 39 (on plastics and articles thereof) to align them with definitions provided in the Basel Convention's plastic waste amendments.</li> </ul>