

**FOURTH UNECE REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION MEETING ON
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

GENEVA, 1-2 December 2009

Agenda item 7. Waste

Intervention by the World Society for the Protection of Animals¹

Thank you Mr. Chair.

We wish to include input to the waste discussion. Waste has, as is well known, profound effects on human health and well being but also, and maybe lesser known, on animals. Notably plastic waste has detrimental effects on wildlife.

Since the early 1970's the amount of plastic in the marine environment has increased dramatically. Around a trillion plastic bags are used world wide every year (10 billion in the UK alone).

Animals mistake them for food & die after ingesting plastic bags which have obstructed their digestive systems. Research so far has shown that 177 species of marine creatures to have been adversely affected by swallowing plastic bags at sea. Birds become trapped in plastic bags hanging off bushes and trees. Whales, seals, turtles and countless fish become entangled in them & suffocate or starve to death as a result.

Thank you.

Paivi Vahvelainen, speaking on behalf of WSPA.

¹ The text is presented as received from the author.