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Intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment

First session

Punta del Este, Uruguay, 28th November–2nd December 2022

Agenda item 4: Preparation of an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment

EU+MS opening statement:

Mr Chair, distinguished delegates,

The EU and its Member States would like to thank Uruguay for its hospitality in hosting the first INC meeting in beautiful Punta del Este, and the UNEP secretariat for all the preparations for this meeting. Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate Jyoti Mathur-Filipp on the appointment as Executive Secretary of the INC secretariat. We look forward to be working with you throughout this process. We also congratulate Gustavo Meza-Cuadra and Luis Vayas Valdivieso for the election of chair and we look forward working closely together in the upcoming years.

Plastic pollution heavily contributes to the triple planetary crisis of, biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution, and has negative impact on human health. The world has seen a massive increase in plastic production and pollution. Global plastic production and consumption is set to triple by 2060 if business continues as usual. Plastic pollution is forecast to grow alongside production and consumption.



The EU and its Member states are determined to seize the opportunity and build on the momentum we achieved at UNEA5.2 in Nairobi. We will engage with the aim to develop an ambitious legally binding international instrument to end plastic pollution. For this INC, the EU and its Member States look forward to having a first exchange of views and discussions on substance. In particular, reaching an early agreement on scope and objectives in broad terms would be important to advance the negotiations.

For the EU and its Member States, it is key that the instrument will address the whole lifecycle of plastics with priority given to the upstream parts, by commitments and provisions that lay the ground for a sustainable production and consumption of plastics, paving the way for a circular plastic economy. The new instrument should also include the necessary obligations to prevent plastics from entering into the environment. It should also address all plastic materials and products, including, microplastics and potentially nanoplastics, irrespective of their source. Unnecessary, avoidable, and problematic plastics, substances and additives should be reduced, eliminated, substituted or banned. Which however does not mean ending all plastic consumption and production

The world has high expectations for us this week. Time is short and we must work together in a cooperative and constructive spirit. Our task is clear – to develop a new legal instrument to end plastic pollution in the environment. We need to act now, and prevent more irreversible damage to the global environment and human health.

We have an opportunity to create a new and modern multilateral agreement building on the lessons learned from the past and create a strong instrument that drive implementation on the ground.

Two days ago, we heard the many voices from the Multistakeholder Forum. It clearly showed that we as governments cannot solve this challenge alone. We need all stakeholders involved.



The EU and its MS would therefore like to stress the importance of continued stakeholder involvement throughout the process in order to create inclusiveness, transparency and credibility. We also stress the importance of designing the stakeholder involvement process in close cooperation with stakeholders themselves, in order to have a format that truly fosters their meaningful involvement.

The EU and its Member states are fully committed and determined to achieve ambitious action across the world that will involve all of us, with no one left behind. For this reason, we consider that it will be important for this negotiation process to address various way in which countries can be supported in their efforts to implement the future agreement.

Before concluding, let me express the EU and its Member States' full solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. The EU continues to condemn in the strongest possible terms Russia's unprovoked and unjustified act of aggression against Ukraine, which grossly violates international law and the UN Charter, undermines international security and stability and exacerbates the challenges the global environment community is seeking to address.

Before concluding, we also would like to thank all Governments that through their generous contributions support the work of the Secretariat and this INC process.

Colleagues,

Let me conclude by stressing once again how important this first INC is.

To end plastic pollution, we must be bold and innovative. I am confident that we are ready for the task ahead of us and I look forward to a constructive and successful meeting with all of you.

I thank you

