

Draft High-Level Statement on Plastic Pollution by the Asia Pacific Group United Nations Environment Assembly

Introduction

Good Morning, Mr. Chair,

Excellencies, Heads of Delegation and Members, Distinguished Colleagues,

1. On behalf of Asia-Pacific Group, we would like to seize this opportunity to convey our region's heartfelt gratitude to the Government of Kenya and donor countries, for the generous hospitality and excellent facilities they have provided. We also extend our appreciation to the UNEP and INC Secretariat for their dedicated work in achieving our common objectives.

2. In 2022, at the last United Nations Environment Assembly, we adopted the historic resolution 5/14: *“End plastic pollution: towards an international legally binding instrument”*.

3. The Asia Pacific Group is firmly committed to the INC process. Despite being a large and diverse group, we all share a collective sense of purpose to tackle the global and transboundary challenge of plastic pollution, and to improve understanding of plastic pollution, including existing plastic pollution.

Priorities

4. The Asia Pacific Group expresses its commitment to collaborate with all Member States in developing an instrument which is pragmatic, well balanced, and inclusive, as well as respecting national sovereignty, with a goal to facilitate practical and effective solutions that will have a tangible impact on the ground hand in hand with means of implementation.

5. To address this, we advocate for an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, based on a comprehensive approach that addresses the full life cycle of plastic, taking into account, among other things, the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, as well as national circumstances and capabilities, based on the mandate of UNEA Resolution 5/14.

6. This will catalyze plastic waste prevention and environmentally sound waste management infrastructure and approaches, allowing countries to implement measures to prevent leakage of plastic waste into the environment and facilitating sustainable development.

7. Recognizing the important role played by plastics in society, we need a comprehensive approach, that directly addresses plastic pollution. There is a necessity for improved product design and application as well as more efficient management to plastic waste to promote the circularity of plastics. It is crucial to promote research into and the development of safe, sustainable, economically viable, and cost-efficient approaches, as well as accessible, and affordable alternatives, while allowing sufficient transition times for countries and markets to adjust. A thorough discussion on the measures and obligations in the instrument is needed to steer clear of wider and unintended or new socioeconomic and environmental impacts and implications and find viable, realistic and equitable transformational paths forward.

8. A robust, science-based approach should underpin our efforts at every stage. Complemented by traditional knowledge, knowledge of Indigenous peoples, and local knowledge systems, this will assist us in identifying the most suitable and context-specific solutions to effectively and sustainably address the challenge of plastic pollution.

9. Discussions on obligations and the means of implementation must go hand in hand and must be part of substantive provisions to take into account different national circumstances and capabilities. Providing timely, appropriate, and adequate financial and technical assistance as well as developing modalities for technology transfer on mutually agreed terms will be key for the implementation of the instrument.

10. We recognize that global and collective actions that are effective and cost-efficient are urgently needed, but acknowledge that there are no definitive solutions and no single approach to tackling plastic pollution, including existing plastic pollution. Each country needs to commit to taking action, and identify strategies and solutions that align with its specific needs, national circumstances, capabilities, and priorities. We must consider the barriers and challenges faced by developing countries, and note that the Asia Pacific region includes countries with diverse contexts, including Small Island Developing States, Least Developed Countries, archipelagic states, and more. We must also recognize the special circumstances of Small Island Developing States, noting that they contribute least to the issue but experience significant impacts of the plastic pollution on a daily basis.

11. Through country-driven actions that are strong and robust, aligned with national plans and strategies, and global actions, we can promote effective and sustainable efforts.

Conclusion

12. Excellencies, Heads of Delegation and Members, Distinguished Colleagues,

13. The Asia Pacific Group is dedicated to collaborating with all Member States and regions to develop a pragmatic, well balanced, and inclusive instrument. We commit to enhancing the political momentum and public awareness, while sparing no effort to accelerate our work through a constructive and flexible approach in order to complete the INC's work achieving an effective plastic pollution instrument by the end of 2024.

14. We look forward to having constructive and fruitful discussions with our distinguished colleagues from other regions.

15. Thank you.