

## Ministerial Conference on Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution

### Draft Ministerial Statement

*Plastic production and consumption are accelerating at an unprecedented rate, which has led to a global plastic pollution crisis. The use and disposal of medical supplies, protective equipment and other anti-COVID-19 items around the world is exacerbating the situation. The impacts of an exponential increase in plastic production are manifested in all areas of the environment, especially the marine environment. These impacts are due to disregard of end-of-life management, insufficient support for the development of alternatives to plastics, continued production and use of unnecessary plastics, and unsound management of plastic waste such as through open burning and dumping.*

*Owing to the nature of the global supply and value chains and the flow of plastic within ocean currents, the challenge of plastic pollution and marine litter is transboundary and global in scope. Current approaches which are limited geographically and consider only parts of the life cycle of plastics have proven insufficient. They are unable to address the scale of this challenge, let alone keep pace with predicted future developments. Consequently, the time has come for countries and stakeholders to ramp up their efforts in this regard and to take collective, ambitious and decisive actions.*

- (1) We recognize that no country can adequately address the various aspects of this challenge alone; hence there is a need to commit to establishing a framework for international collaboration and cooperation that provides a level playing field in terms of the global economy. This framework would include coordinated actions to address the challenge of plastic pollution. It would also establish commitment and accountability with respect to realizing a common vision.
- (2) We emphasize that global solidarity and the involvement of all stakeholders must be guiding principles. Urgent action is needed at the local, national, regional and global levels, including setting common objectives, developing concrete targets and action plans, taking strong measures, and strengthening global and regional cooperation and decision-making, informed by science. We call on all actors, including governments, the private sector, academia and civil society to contribute on the basis of their strengths to, among others, internalize the costs of damage by pollution as far as possible, eliminate unnecessary plastics from the value chain

and increase circularity, and to support the efforts countries are making to protect and sustainably manage the environment.

- (3) While we see the need for further qualification of economic, social and environmental impacts, available information has made clear that the costs of inaction, including the costs of environmental damage, far exceed those of actions taken to combat plastic pollution and marine litter.
- (4) Thus, we highlight the necessity for a Global Agreement based on a clear and common vision, with ambitious objectives, suitable indicators, and the measures necessary to achieve the elimination or, where that is impossible, the minimization of all negative impacts of plastic throughout its life cycle, including the reduction and progressive elimination of direct and indirect discharges of plastic into the environment. In our view, the Agreement should:
  - a. Be based on a precautionary approach and recognize the devastating and frequently irreversible impact of plastic pollution on ecosystems, the climate and livelihoods. The Agreement should cover all recognized international gaps, and complement and enhance existing instruments, while avoiding duplication of efforts.
  - b. Take a long-term approach in developing strategies that avoid technological path dependencies, environmental cross-media and economic leakage effects, and environmental trade-offs along the whole value chain.
  - c. Contain solutions based on cross-sectoral and holistic approaches that address the whole life cycle of plastic products and the availability of alternatives, aiming at circularity. Preventive measures should be prioritized, including designing out plastic waste and pollution as well as fostering reusability, recyclability and repairability at different levels, while the immediate plastic pollution crisis is addressed through remediation, to the extent possible, of plastic already present in the environment.
  - d. Include specific measures for certain plastics considered to present particular risks to the environment and human health due to their chemical structure and additives, and for products regarded as impossible to collect and manage safely.
  - e. Include a monitoring and evaluation mechanism to measure progress in eliminating plastic discharges.
- (5) We recognize that specific circumstances require solutions to be adapted, while building on existing best available techniques and environmental practices. The approaches used should be both science-based and pragmatic, promoting preventive and precautionary measures. The

need for capacity building should be considered, as well as technical and financial assistance for those countries most in need of such assistance.

- (6) Considering the transboundary nature of plastic pollution, and to ensure traceability and transparency, we support the development of common methods and standards, including internationally recognized environmental information to address global information gaps, aimed at the development of an efficient and coordinated global effort to combat all types of plastic pollution, including marine litter.
- (7) Therefore, without prejudging UNEA-5.2 discussions, and in view of the substantial body of work already undertaken, existing political support and the urgency of the plastic pollution crisis, we affirm our commitment to take the next decisive steps, by striving for the timely establishment of an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution at UNEA-5.2, with the aim of achieving a new Global Agreement with ambitious goals without delaying urgent action.