

S&T Major Group statement for the opening of the INC-1

29 November

Dear Mr. President/Chair,

My name is Margaret Spring and I deliver this statement on behalf of the Science and Technology Major Group as representative of the International Science Council, a global science organization bringing together the natural and social sciences to inform international action on issues of major scientific and public importance.

The S&T Major Group welcomes the negotiations on a legally binding treaty on plastic pollution in all environmental compartments, including in the ocean, which are a crucial step towards an increased protection of the global environment currently under massive strain and on the brink of disastrous tipping points.

Addressing the problems posed by plastic pollution is a multifaceted and systemic challenge. Plastics, more than 90% of which are produced from fossil feedstocks, are found everywhere on Earth, including our bodies, and are responsible for a range of adverse impacts on humans and the environment. This global problem requires legally-binding global commitments and action, and we call on governments to ensure that the intergovernmental negotiation process is informed by robust, independent, updated peer-reviewed and multidisciplinary scientific evidence, including traditional and indigenous knowledge, to inform deliberations, decisions and implementation of commitments.

A systems approach is required to address the global plastic pollution crisis in a comprehensive way. Solutions and actions are required immediately as plastic pollution is one of the most pressing human health, human rights, environmental crises we face. Action must be informed by integrated, multi-disciplinary scientific evidence looking at the different aspects of plastics across the full life cycle and its wide-ranging impacts. Indeed, UNEA Resolution 5/14 paragraphs 4(d) and (f) recognize the importance of ensuring that the development of the treaty is informed by the best available scientific information, including traditional knowledge, knowledge of indigenous peoples and local knowledge systems. We acknowledge the numerous statements in the process thus far that have emphasized that transparent and trusted science advice will be essential to craft an effective treaty.

Ensuring the effectiveness as well as the successful implementation of the treaty will benefit from the establishment of a scientific assessment and advisory mechanism for

monitoring and reviewing progress, providing policy-relevant best available scientific evidence and guidance from across the natural and social sciences and assessing potential solutions in a diversity of contexts against a harmonized set of quantitative and qualitative metrics.

This scientific assessment and advisory mechanism should be structured to facilitate scientist engagement and to ensure transparent development and delivery of the best available science in a timely way, starting with the INC process. Such activities could occur alongside or between INC meetings and include hosting science workshops, organizing delegate briefings, convening policymakers to solicit key questions, preparing scientific and technical summaries, catalyzing research and analysis on sources and solutions, and engaging the broader public in such discussions, to ensure a strong science-policy-society interface.

Finally, we wish to stress that there is enough scientific evidence to act now. For instance, the health effects of chemicals used in plastics have been extremely well documented in multiple reports by independent scientific entities. There will always be uncertainties, and the precautionary principle must be applied.

Thank you very much for your attention, and we stand ready to contribute to the process and ensure that negotiations and actions moving forward effectively engage science and scientists across the world.