

GRULAC OPENING STATEMENT (Read by Colombia)

It is my pleasure to address the plenary on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries, GRULAC.

At the outset, GRULAC wants to highlight the cardinal importance of this process for the interests of the region. GRULAC has actively engaged in these multilateral discussions since their inception in Nairobi, and will continue to do so in a constructive manner during this and the upcoming sessions of the INC.

GRULAC member states are extremely concerned about the growing trends and impacts of plastic pollution on human health and on the environment, including those related to the use of hazardous chemical additives in the production of plastics. Our region's share in the global production of plastic is small and yet, the best available scientific evidence shows that Latin America and the Caribbean is one of the regions most affected by plastic pollution in land, air, and oceans. This feature points out the transboundary nature of the problem and the need for an integrated global approach to address it, involving all relevant sectors and stakeholders

This approach shall go beyond voluntary national actions and country-driven measures, taking into account the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, in particular that of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances.

GRULAC affirms that in order to have effective implementation of the future instrument developing countries need commensurate means of

implementation to achieve its objectives. These include: the provision of new, additional, predictable and adequate financial resources; access, development and transfer of technology; and capacity building. Furthermore, means of implementation are crosscutting in nature and should be addressed from the beginning of the negotiation.

Other key principles of international environmental law guiding the INC meetings should include, among others, the precautionary principle, the polluter pays principle, the equity principle and Principle 12 of the Rio Declaration. GRULAC welcomes the recognition by the UN General Assembly¹ of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right and adds that a human rights approach should also guide this negotiation.

Gender-responsive and intergenerational approaches are important in addressing health issues associated with hazardous chemicals in plastic and plastic waste, as well as those related to the health of workers involved in the plastic sector, since, in addition to environmental and consumer risk, there is occupational exposure. This includes, in particular, waste pickers and informal recyclers.

Systemic changes are required to address plastic pollution. GRULAC considers the full lifecycle-approach and the implementation of integral management measures at the upstream, midstream, and downstream levels and across the plastics value chain as urgent and needed for the accomplishment of the SDGs by 2030 and the vision of living in harmony with nature by 2050, balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development– economic, social and environmental. These measures

¹ A/RES/76/300

should also be complemented with the sharing of knowledge, education, awareness raising and the acceleration of research and development. GRULAC has the potential to assist this transition through bioeconomy solutions and sustainable innovative products that add value from our biodiversity.

A comprehensive global framework to address plastic pollution is sorely lacking. Harmonization of the current chemicals and waste governance landscape is required, without jeopardizing progress achieved in other multilateral environmental agreements and avoiding duplication of efforts. The Vienna Convention and its Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and the Minamata Convention on Mercury are good framework examples to consider and build upon while negotiating this binding instrument.

The outcome of this process should be flexible enough to adapt to new challenges and scientific findings, while at the same time allowing member states transition periods for implementation, taking into account national circumstances and capabilities.

The efforts should be focused on achieving the maximum impact on priority control measures related to different kinds of plastics, such as single-use plastics, microplastics and hazardous chemicals and additives in the full life cycle of plastic, as well as existing plastic waste in the marine environment.

GRULAC recognizes the importance of the science-policy interface and reiterates the call for the INC to consider throughout the process the best available science, traditional knowledge, knowledge of Indigenous

Peoples and local knowledge systems, as well as socioeconomic information and assessment related to plastic pollution.

GRULAC believes that there is room to improve the multistakeholder engagement. The recognition of the role of waste pickers and informal recyclers is key for our region. We strongly call to make better use of the inter-sessional period, with multistakeholder and regional meetings programmed in a way that allows for them to feed into the process. In the conduct of work, we also urge to avoid the proliferation of multiple sub-working or contact groups, which may hinder the participation of small delegations, like most of GRULAC's. We also call upon the Secretariat and sponsoring Member States to allocate adequate funds to allow financial assistance for at least two delegates per each developing country.

While GRULAC commends the Secretariat for preparing and organizing all the working documents for this first meeting of the INC, as a good basis for discussion, we expect that documents for subsequent INC meetings will be made available in all official languages in due time.

We welcome the decision by the INC that, on the basis of the agreement endorsed and presented by GRULAC for splitting the terms between Peru and Ecuador, Ambassador Meza-Cuadra of Peru has been elected as Chair of the Committee. We congratulate him and wish him success.

Finally, GRULAC expresses its sincere gratitude to the host country Uruguay for taking the lead and pays tribute to its hospitality and tradition in the promotion and development of international law, which we hope to honour during this meeting.