



## **Opening speech by the Workers and Trade Unions Major Group represented by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)**

Opening plenary, Monday 29 May 2023.

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Dear chair,  
Dear delegates,

Thank you for this important opportunity to share the views of the world wide workers movement on plastic pollution. I'm the global climate and environment policy lead of the International Trade Union Confederation. The ITUC is the voice of the world's working people. Our primary mission is the promotion and defence of workers' rights and interests. The ITUC represents 200 million workers in 168 countries and territories and has 338 member trade unions. We are the biggest workers' organization worldwide.

There are two messages that I would like to share with you.

First, millions of workers see their livelihoods threatened by plastic pollution, on land and in the seas and oceans. We represent workers in agriculture, fisheries, the tourism industry, etc. that depend on protected forests, agricultural lands, oceans for their jobs. We also represent millions of workers that are dealing with plastic pollution and will be affected by the measures we urgently need to take. I'm speaking about the fossil fuel and chemical industry workers, upstream in the plastic's value chain. We also represent the municipal workers and waste pickers downstream in the value chaine. All workers need a place at the table of the negotiations. I repeat: ALL WORKERS need to be represented, formal and informal workers, from the oil and chemical industry all the way to the waste pickers.

Second, what do these workers need? They need a 'just transition'. They need the combination of effective solutions to tackle plastic pollution together with the protection of their livelihoods and jobs. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has a comprehensive toolbox to guarantee social justice in the implementation of ambitious measures that effectively tackle plastic pollution. During this week, those social safeguards need to come on the table. All workers and the organisations that represent them need a place at the table, as actors to engage in policy development that will stop plastic pollution.