

Regional Statement for INC1 by Asia Pacific Group

First and foremost, the Asia Pacific Group extends its gratitude to the Government of Uruguay for hosting this very important session. We as a Group wholeheartedly welcome the much-awaited launching of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.

The Asia Pacific region is home to widely diverse countries, but we share in common, the sense of urgency to tackle this transboundary issue by strengthening global and regional coordination and cooperation. Group members have long been suffering from the impacts of plastic pollution, and there are many best practices at the local, national and regional level that we have been accumulating over the years which we can bring to the table.

Some of the Group members have introduced bans on single use plastic products, restricted the use of microplastics in certain product categories, implemented extended producer responsibility (EPR) systems throughout the entire lifecycle of plastics, adopted measures based on the polluter pays principle, are implementing the eco-school program to raise public awareness, and have been achieving impressive waste collection and recycling rates. There are various regional initiatives, including guidance for harmonizing monitoring and assessment mechanisms on marine litter and plastic pollution, efforts for preparing a platform for harmonized data sharing, and providing international assistance towards formulating national action plans.

More recently, the Group welcomes Qatar to host the first World Cup in the world to be carbon neutral, in addition to Qatar's efforts to reduce waste production especially plastics.

In moving forward, we need to strengthen our efforts. The Group recognizes the essential role of capacity building, technical and financial assistance as well as technology transfer to ensure the high ambition and effectiveness of the instrument and its ambitious implementation.

The Group is committed to actively engaging in the important discussions ahead of us. We hope INC1 will lay the foundations for our endeavor towards ending plastic pollution, making progress step by step, recognizing that there are many paths to reach our goal. We welcome and support the offer of the Republic of Korea to host an INC in 2024, which will contribute to geographical diversity in the selection of the venues.

The Asia Pacific Group emphasizes the need to build an ambitious and inclusive, but practical instrument and encourages participation and actions by all countries – whether large or small; developed or developing; island or continental; and coastal or land-locked.

At the same time, we reiterate that our task is ending plastic pollution, not necessarily plastics themselves. Plastics do play an important role in our society today, and we must utilize all available options, solutions, technologies, and approaches to promote effective, flexible and balanced measures at every stage of the entire lifecycle of plastics, while taking into account, among other things, the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, as well as national circumstances and capabilities.

Additionally, we reiterate the need to respect the mandate we have all decided under UNEA resolution 5/14. The resolution is the fruit of hard negotiations and the spirit of mutual understanding, therefore, fulfilling its mandate should be our top priority. The Group stresses that the discussions of all elements listed in the resolution should receive the same attention to ensure a balanced and consensus-based outcome.

Chair, excellencies, distinguished colleagues, in concluding our statement, the Asia Pacific Group reiterates its commitment to proactively engage in the discussions, and we look forward to a productive week ahead of us.

Thank you.