

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, on behalf of the government of the Republic of Korea, I would like to congratulate you on your election as the Chair of the INC. We believe we can make good progress under your able leadership. We also would like to extend our deep gratitude to the government of Uruguay for their hospitality and for the UNEP Secretariat for making excellent preparation for this meeting.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

The Republic of Korea, as one of the co-sponsors of the UNEA Resolution 5/14, is deeply committed to the work of the INC to fulfill the mandate given by this resolution. This resolution gives us a clear mandate to incorporate both international measures and national action plans. This resolution also mandates us to tackle the problem from all stages of the life-cycle of the plastic, from its cradle to the grave.

The Republic of Korea believes that the starting point of our discussion in INC-1 should be a reaffirmation that there should not be a watering down of this mandate. The final text we arrive at should enable four things in a nutshell: to reduce, to reuse, to recycle and to replace with cleaner alternatives or substitutes.

Based upon this firm resolve, we now need to look at how to make the international legally binding instrument feasible.

First, on the structure of the instrument, we are flexible on both options of a specific convention and a framework convention, as long as it can serve our goals to bring consumption and production of plastics to sustainable levels, and to enable a circular economy that protects the environment and human health.

Second, our work here in INC-1 should be to have a rich and constructive discussion which leads us to options for essential elements and ultimately informs the drafting of a zero text. For in-depth discussion on the elements, we support setting up two informal groups; one on definitions, objectives, core obligations, control measures and implementations including national action plans and the other on means of implementation, including capacity-building, technical assistance and finance. We are of the view that the third workstream on monitoring and evaluation of progress in, and effectiveness of implementation can be combined with the first workstream.

Finally, we strongly support multi-stakeholder engagement. Our own domestic policy experiences show that plastic consumption and production are deeply ingrained within the life-style of our public. Without a public buy-in, nudged by the public policy, our efforts would be in vain. What we need is a clear and consistent signaling which will encourage innovation away from pollution and towards cleaner alternatives.

In this regard, we commend the efforts of Uruguay and the UNEP Secretariat in organizing a multistakeholder forum during this INC-1, and believe that going forward, there should be a feedback

loop between the negotiations and the stakeholders' discussion.

Before I close, I'd like to mention that Korea is honored to be named as a potential host of the last round of INC in the latter half of 2024. With the decision on the host countries to be made sometime this week, I'd like to reiterate our support for the work of the INC. Thank you.