

Statement by South Africa during the First Inter-Governmental Negotiating Committee (INC-1), Punta del Este, 28 November 2022

Chairperson

Distinguished delegates

The South African delegation is grateful for the excellent organisation by the Government of Uruguay, UNEP and the INC Secretariat.

South Africa aligns itself with the Statement made by Ghana on behalf of the 54 member states of the Africa Group.

South Africa appreciates the efforts that have been done voluntarily by member states and stakeholders on curbing plastic pollution however these voluntary initiatives have limitations. Legally binding measures throughout the lifecycle of plastics are a necessary policy mix in addressing plastic pollution.

South Africa supports the inclusion of both legally binding and voluntary measures in the full lifecycle stages of plastics. As qualified by respective circumstances, South Africa calls on the INC to prioritise control measures for problematic and unnecessary plastic products. Elimination measures and restrictions have been applied to plastic products in our national legislation. Circularity measures including product design have also been introduced to plastic products including setting recycled content targets. Voluntary Extended Producer Responsibility schemes were not adequate and South Africa has passed legislation on Extended Producer Responsibility for plastic products.

South Africa supports an evidence-based approach informed by prioritisation based on processes and plastic products that are prone to cause environmental pollution.

Polluter pays principle applied to the full lifecycle of plastics is key. South Africa is in support of the immediate establishment of a contact group on the means of implementation. As we embark on this journey, critical to any success would be the means of implementation required by developing countries. This element of the instrument should be a key feature for each stage of the plastic lifecycle, each control measure and a key feature of each INC meeting. It is of utmost importance that the Rio Principle, in particular the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) and Respective Capabilities is put at the centre of the means of implementation.

It is appreciated that all stakeholders are on the table in the sharing of knowledge and best practices to ensure that negotiations are well informed. To this extent, South Africa urges the INC to recognise the role that waste pickers play in curbing plastic pollution. South Africa calls on the INC to consider measures that are inclusive of informal waste pickers

and further support waste picker integration, and also ensure a just transition. The livelihoods sustained by waste picking should be protected by the instrument measures.

Whilst the model of a framework convention has its advantages, my delegation is of the view that the international community does not have the luxury of time to negotiate the substantive aspects of the international instrument incrementally and over prolonged time. South Africa cautions that with framework conventions, important decisions and substantive matters may be deferred to a later time which is relatively not the case with Specific Conventions. Further delays would not be desirable given the ambitious work and timelines aligned to the INC mandate to finalise this Instrument.

I thank you.