

General Statement of Sri Lanka

1st Session of the Intergovernmental negotiating committee (INC) to develop a legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. 28th November 2022, Punta del Est – Uruguay

Mr Chair, Excellencies, and Distinguish Delegates

First of all I would like to thank the Government of Uruguay for hosting this very important event, bringing many nations together in finding solutions to minimize plastic pollution. Sri Lanka was able to highlight the issue of plastic pollution by submitting two resolutions on Marine plastic litter and Microplastics and Waste Management to UNEA 4 in 2019 which got adopted and finally UNEA 5/14 made history with the initiation of INC process.

Sri Lanka has taken many initiatives and committed to INC to minimize plastic pollution in the country and has developed the “National Action Plan on Plastic Waste Management 2021-2030”

Development and updating of NDCs (Nationally Determined Contributions) under climate change on waste management, banning of some selected single use plastics, introducing plastic category identification codes, establishment of material recovery facilities, research on micro plastics, are some of the activities carried out up to date.

But there are many more areas that needs urgent attention, as many activities have been affected by the severe economic crisis of the country, which is common to most of the countries under economic crisis.

The plastic pollution caused by the eruption of fire on Ship “X-press Pearl”, spilling around 1600 MT (around 80 billion pellets) of plastics into Sri Lankan waters in 2021 cannot be forgotten or neglected, as the impacts will be there for years to come. Therefore plastic disasters of this nature should be paid attention, and mechanisms should be developed to address them through INC.

Strengthening of capacities to enhance environment risk assessment processes, and rehabilitation of the contaminated sites needs urgent attention.

Accumulation of residual plastic waste at waste dumpsites too has caused a serious threat to Sri Lanka, as well as to many countries, where residual waste needs to be treated and disposed in an environmentally friendly manner.

Transboundary movement of waste plastics, including waste floats through sea currents, needs further attention and control as it causes impacts for many countries, including Sri Lanka.

Improve recyclable waste collection mechanism to increase waste recycling rates, production and popularizing of alternatives for plastics at affordable prices and making behavioural changes of the people are a must.

It is important to build consensus among nations to control production of toxic plastics to safeguard human health and the environment. As per the scientific research data many of us breath, drink and eat micro plastics every day without knowing through inhalation, food and drink.

Finally I would also like to commend the UNEP INC Plastic Secretariat for their hard work and wish the deliberations to be very successful to save the planet earth for all living beings and the future generations.

Thank you