Article 3- Plastic product
Islamic Republic of Ian

As all of us know, the primary objective of Resolution UNEA 5/14 is to reduce plastic pollution, which primarily originates from the mismanagement of plastic waste. Therefore, the future instrument must mobilize global efforts to increase the recyclability and reusability rates of plastic, playing a vital role in substantially minimizing pollution from plastic waste.

To achieve this, we advocate for the embrace of diversified technologies, such as (AR/CR) in the upper bound and Mechanical Recycling (MR) in downstream processes, coupled with improvements and optimization in product design for better recyclability and reusability. This should be at the core of the instrument's focus.

Upon maturity of these actions, if a country decides to shift to alternative plastic products or materials, those decisions should be made nationally. Such decisions must be based on each country's capacities, capabilities, and circumstances, supported by life cycle assessment (LCA) analyses comparing the impacts of these alternatives with existing plastic products.

In our view, while addressing plastic pollution is crucial, a voluntary approach within national contexts could yield more effective results by promoting local engagement, fostering innovation, and allowing for tailored solutions that resonate with specific communities.

We believe the infrastructure for recycling facilities varies significantly across countries, influenced by various socio-economic and cultural factors. Therefore, addressing plastic pollution and identifying viable alternatives should be approached at the national level in each country.

Furthermore, it is essential to specify the criteria that determine concerns regarding plastic products. The Resolution UNEA 5/14 does not categorize plastic products as 'problematic' or 'avoidable.' Thus, in line with other MEAs, such as the Basel Convention, we prefer to use the term 'concern' when discussing plastic products and waste management.

The adjectives 'problematic' and 'avoidable' are context-dependent, varying based on local circumstances and socio-economic factors. We seek clarification on the sources and definitions of these terms as they relate to plastic products.

In response to the countries requesting a list of banned products, we would like to clarify that our current discussions are centered on identification and

analysis of criteria and frameworks for assessing concern on plastic products. To determine the concern regarding specific plastic products should consider the socio-economic context of each country, along with peer-reviewed scientific evidence.

The appropriate approach to plastic products is to first focus on increasing recycling and reusability rates. Currently, less than 10% of plastic products are recycled, and over half of plastic waste is landfilled. Only after reaching a more mature level of recycling should we evaluate the human health and environmental impacts of alternatives . Without completing these steps, preparing a phase-out date and lists for certain plastic products would be nearly impossible .

One of the most important features of a country's socio-economic situation is its climate, which is evaluated based on the availability of water resources and fertile land. Consequently, the alternatives to plastic products and the solutions to related challenges will not be uniform across different regions.

Peer reviewed scientific assessments should include factors such as the lifecycle impact of alternatives, resource availability, and the effectiveness of substitutes in fulfilling essential functions.

The appropriate approach to addressing plastic products is to prioritize increasing the rates of recycling and reusability. Only after reaching a mature level of these practices—something we are still striving for—should we then evaluate the impacts of plastic products on health, the environment, and the socio-economic situation of alternatives. By focusing first on enhancing recycling and reuse efforts, we can work towards mitigating the negative effects of plastic usage while ensuring that any transitions to alternatives are informed by a comprehensive understanding of their implications. This methodical approach will help guide us toward more sustainable and effective solutions in managing plastic products.

We would like to draw the attention of the expert to this statistics that based on the facts in 2022 the majority of plastics used by the manufacturing sector were fossil-based , Around 8.9% were post recycled plastics (Mechanically or chemically) and only 0.5% were derived from Bio-based sources so this difference , showing why we prefer first to focus on increasing the recycle rate then go to the next step for alternative LCA assessment. Focusing on increasing the recycling rate is more easier and logical while emphesizing on bio based plastics are not proper solution for

many part of the world have not enough water and fertile land also it need a special recycling facility and equipments in the infrastructure that’s why it is easier ,cheaper and logical to focus how to increase the recyclability and reusability .

In addressing concerns related to plastic products, it is crucial to consider their specific applications and the entire product value chain. If a plastic product raises concerns, the respective country should first implement necessary measures to manage pollution by increasing the recycling rate, utilizing either upstream (Advanced Recycling/ Chemical Recycling) or downstream Mechanical Recycling technologies. In parallel, efforts should be made to optimize product design to enhance and manage the plastic lifecycle, promoting better reusability, recyclability, and functionality of the products.

Once these actions reach a mature level, the next step is to evaluate and compare the life cycle assessment (LCA) impacts of potential alternatives, while also considering national socio-economic circumstances, such as supply-demand elasticity, to ensure informed decision-making.

Defining single-use and short-lived plastic products is highly contingent upon their application within each country. Identifying suitable alternatives must also be a nationally driven process that takes into account the unique cultural and socio-economic needs of each nation. Moreover, the impacts of these alternatives on human health, the environment, and the socio-economic landscape must be thoroughly evaluated and assessed.

Consequently, there cannot be a one-size-fits-all pathway, including a global list of single-use and short-lived plastic products that should be banned. Instead, it is essential to advocate for a more nuanced approach that recognizes the distinct requirements and circumstances of each country. This tailored strategy will ensure that policy measures are both effective and culturally relevant, ultimately leading to more sustainable outcomes in the management of plastic products.