CONSUMERS INTERNATIONAL STATEMENT

Fourth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment

30th April 2024

Your Excellencies and esteemed delegates,

it is with great responsibility and urgency that, on behalf of Consumers International, a network of over 200 consumer groups, that we present today our key priorities for the development of a strong global plastics treaty. Our positions are aligned with the legitimate needs of consumers and the pressing necessity to safeguard our environment for present and future generations.

1. Alignment throughout the instrument with UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection  We would like to highlight the importance of incorporating consumer rights in the treaty, which includes the right to safe products and a healthy environment. We strongly advocate for the alignment to, and inclusion of, the UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection to ensure that the legitimate needs of consumers are met. This alignment will serve as the cornerstone for promoting responsible production and consumption practices.

2. On Non-plastic Substitutes  We assert the importance of making safe and environmentally sound non-plastic substitutes available, accessible, and affordable to consumers. This is essential in reducing the ubiquity of plastics, and thereby reducing the reliance of consumers on plastic products and mitigating its adverse environmental and health impacts.

3. Transparency in Consumer Information  We strongly call for the consideration and inclusion of consumers' right to access transparent and verifiable information about plastic products and packaging in the treaty, especially with respect to chemicals of concern and their impact on health and environment. This information should be accurate, verifiable and clear, to prevent misleading claims and empower consumers to make informed choices.
4. Reduction of Plastic Production We call for the recognition of production as the root cause of the plastic pollution crisis and resolutely advocate for this obligation to be explored further during intersessional work including an agreement on reduction of plastic production with definitive targets and timelines.

5. Legally Binding Language for Accountability We are calling for the adoption of legally binding language throughout the instrument to ensure that the purpose of UNEA Resolution 5/14 is realised in letter and spirit.

Due consideration of these matters is essential in accomplishing responsible production and consumption to tackle the menace of plastic pollution. We are eager to engage in constructive dialogue and collaboration with all stakeholders to achieve meaningful outcomes ahead of the intersessional work and INC5 negotiations.

We have been hearing that it is the consumers who are responsible for plastic pollution; We would like to highlight that numerous studies in recent years have revealed that consumers are increasingly prioritising sustainable choices, however in the absence of an ecosystem with affordable, safe and environmentally sound alternatives to plastics, the transition is an uphill battle. The negotiators have the power and responsibility to effect a system change which will allow consumers to make informed and sustainable choices and not be individually or collectively burdened.

Finally, we extend our gratitude to the Chair, and all members of the INC for their dedication and commitment throughout the week in strengthening the treaty to end plastic pollution. Let us continue to be ambitious, inclusive, and bold in our pursuit

Thank you for your attention.
Consumers International