COOK ISLANDS - CLOSING PLENARY STATEMENT

Chair, esteemed delegates, Kia Orana,

The Cook Islands is thankful to you Chair and your team, for the steady leadership and to members and non-state actors for the hard work and commitment throughout these long days.

Allow us Chair, to reaffirm the Cook Islands’ unwavering commitment to this negotiation process.

As a large ocean state, our past, present and future is tied to our Moana O Kiva, but today, this interconnectedness, this symbiotic relationship is threatened more than ever. Our umbilical cord, our lifeline is being choked with plastic waste and we, as a people, as a region, are justifiably concerned.

Chair, we all agree that Plastic pollution is a severe global challenge with plastic waste already reaching alarming levels worldwide. While we continue to grapple with existing gaps in current MEAs, failing recycling efforts and unsustainable plastic production, the amount of plastic waste inevitably continues to rise. This means that the Cook Islands, like other Pacific Islands, will continue to struggle to cope with the influx of plastic waste, turning us into unwitting Plastic Colonies.

This is a future that we flatly refuse.

And this is why Chair, the failure to include consideration of primary plastic polymers in the topics of the intersessional work plan remains a grave concern for us, especially since a large number of other countries equally supported this request. We hereby put on record that our request to compile a scientific and technical report covering the baselines and sustainable levels of production and consumption, is still ignored.

This being said, regardless whether our priorities, like those of many others, didn't make it into the intersessional work plan, we will continue to engage on them in Busan and continue to advocate for their rightful place in an ambitious and effective treaty.

We reiterate that a treaty without consideration for a full life cycle approach should not become a consideration at any cost. We therefore call on members to sign the Bridge to Busan Declaration, a vital initiative introduced by our Pacific colleagues from the Federated States of Micronesia.

Amidst the challenges in finding the best way to move forward, we hope that the spirit of unity and determination to complete our mandate under UNEA 5/14 continue to prevail. There is still much work ahead, and so little time, so Chair, Colleagues, together, let us forge ahead, in good faith and leaving no one behind.

In conclusion, allow us to thank the People and the Government of Canada for the beautiful hosting over the week and we wish all delegates safe travels back to your home and family.

Meitaki maata e kia manuia, Thank you Chair.