Statement on transparency, essentiality, safety, and sustainability criteria, chemicals of concern and the need for an SPI
by the Scientists’ Coalition for an Effective Plastics Treaty

at the Fourth Session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment (INC4) Ottawa, Canada 23 – 29 April 2024

I speak here on behalf of The Scientists’ Coalition, for an Effective Plastics Treaty.

The need for a robust treaty is clear - 6 billion tonnes of plastic have accumulated on our planet: with extensive evidence of harm to human health and the environment. Unabated, this figure could triple by 2060.

Addressing plastic pollution necessitates a mandate for baselines and targets for a reduction in primary polymer production. We therefore support the CRP from Rwanda and Peru.

Some plastics have important roles in society. We therefore, recommend the essential use concept from the Montreal Protocol. This would ensure that essential plastics can be granted exemptions.

4200 hazardous chemicals are used in plastics; there is strong evidence that these are harmful to human and environmental health.

But, we hear two points of confusion:

1) that existing MEAs can address all chemicals used in plastics. This is not the case because their scope is insufficient.

2) by including plastics chemicals in the Treaty non-plastic applications would also be affected. This is not the case because non-plastic application are outside the scope.

The science is clear, this Treaty can only protect human health and the environment if it addresses chemicals of concern.

In conclusion, transparent data on plastic chemicals and polymers will be crucial to assess essentiality, safety and sustainability and evaluate the success.

If we reduce, detoxify, and improve transparency of plastics at the supply side, the scale of other actions at mid and downstream will be significantly reduced particularly for developing countries.

Successful development of these criteria rests upon establishing an independent science body that is free of conflicts of interest, starting with intersessional work prior to INC 5.