Environmental Justice Foundation’s Statement to INC-4

Ending plastic pollution is long overdue. Like the efforts to stay below 1.5 degrees Celsius of global heating, we have all the evidence-based, scientifically proven solutions and local actions we need to end the plastic crisis threatening human health and biodiversity. Yet, we still need the political will to take real action and face the truth.

The first truth is we need to reduce overall plastic production, be it from fossil fuel or plant-based sources. Overproduction and consumption are sustainability’s worst enemies, and we need to start by halting the influx of plastics in our daily lives, as it reaches the deepest ocean, the highest mountains, and our own bodies.

The second truth is that while plastics have facilitated the improvement of human livelihoods, short-lived, unnecessary, and problematic plastics are choking us and our oceans. We need agreed lists of these plastics and a globally coordinated time frame to phase them out. This must begin immediately with all non-essential single-use plastics.

The third truth is plastic circularity is impossible. Recycling only extends the plastic’s lifespan before it ends up in landfills or incinerated. We need to fix the broken model, which allows big carbon emitters to keep producing and pushing plastics and puts a greener spin on the carbon emissions. There are other answers for a water bottle we throw away within minutes of using. Reuse, refill, repair, and other systems are key approaches we must focus on to achieve a sustainable future.

Lastly, the final truth is that everyone in this room can make the change. While committed to resolving issues via consensus to the greatest degree possible, we want countries to retain the right to vote as an indispensable precursor to an effective Instrument. Let’s use this one-in-a-generation opportunity to create a legally binding instrument that is as ambitious and inclusive as possible to protect the people and planet and to end plastic pollution.

Thank you very much.