

Opening statement by the European Union and its 27 Member States at the resumed Fifth Session of the Intergovernmental Negotiation Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment (INC-5.2)

5-14 August, Geneva, Switzerland

Mr. Chair, distinguished delegates,

We, the European Union and its 27 Member States, would like to begin by expressing our sincere appreciation, Mr. Chair, for your continued efforts in guiding the INC process. We fully support your leadership and the steps you are proposing to facilitate our collective work towards finalising an effective international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution at this resumed session of the INC-5 (INC-5.2).

We would also like to take the opportunity to thank Switzerland for hosting us for these critical and hopefully final negotiations. This historic setting of the Palais des Nations serves as a powerful reminder of how, we as Members to the United Nations, have again and again demonstrated our ability to cooperate, to compromise and to jointly find solutions to address our shared challenges.

We have not arrived here overnight. The road has been long and rocky. At the fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly in 2022, we agreed unanimously to finalise a legally binding instrument by the end of 2024. That milestone has now passed. We now meet again with the commitment to finish what we tasked ourselves to do. The urgency has not diminished. If anything, it has grown. Now the moment is here to deliver on the promises we made to the world.

The time has come to overcome our differences and confront one of the most pressing environmental challenges of our time: plastic pollution. It is a crisis that demands more than good intentions – it demands decisive, informed and collective global action. Yes, our views and national situations vary – that’s a fact. But this process must demonstrate that multilateral cooperation can rise to the challenge. And once again demonstrate that the international community is capable of reaching an agreement, and acting with unity and determination in the face of global environmental threats. We need a robust, international legally binding agreement. We need a global plastics treaty that actually works and contains the necessary elements to reach our common goal to end plastic pollution.

To effectively end plastic pollution, we must address it at its very source and take coordinated action across the entire life cycle of plastics from production and consumption to waste management.

Let us be very clear: plastic pollution is a global problem and we all have a responsibility to tackle this. As we move forward, we must ensure that no one is left behind – and in particular consider the needs of vulnerable communities.

It is essential that this treaty signals a clear commitment to reverse the current unsustainable levels of production and consumption of plastics. This will require new sustainable business models and shifts in consumer behaviour.

We need to take measures that address the most harmful plastic products including chemicals of concern that too often are released into the environment and damage human health and ecosystems. That’s why we support

global, legally binding measures to tackle them including to phase them out. We remain however ready to discuss how this can be done in a way that respects national circumstances.

We need clear design criteria such as durability, recyclability and resource efficiency to encourage the development of innovative and more safe, sustainable and circular products. Combined with Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), the design of plastic products plays a crucial role in preventing plastic pollution throughout their lifecycle, and placing appropriate responsibility on the producers and other economic actors across the value chain to support environmentally sound waste management. A truly effective lifecycle approach should also include concrete commitments to ensure the environmentally sound collection, sorting, and recycling of plastic waste.

The treaty must also be adaptable. It should allow the Conference of Parties (COP) to take informed and effective decisions and update provisions and annexes as needed. The treaty must include a solid financial mechanism, which builds on the polluter pays principle, and which supports the effective implementation of the treaty – especially in Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States.

Mr. Chair, the European Union and its Member States remain fully committed to actively working towards the successful conclusion of an effective agreement at INC-5.2. We will continue to engage constructively, contributing to building bridges and seeking common solutions to end plastic pollution.

Thank you.