Opening Statement

Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC)
Fourth Session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-4)

April 23, 2024
Ottawa, Canada

Mr. Chair,

I am honoured to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC) countries.

We would like to thank the Government of Canada for hosting this important meeting and to congratulate Ambassador Luis Vayas Valdivieso for assuming the Chairpersonship of the INC and to commend him and his team for their diligent work during this intersessional period. We thank the INC Secretariat for organizing this session and for the preparation of the Revised Draft Text which directly responds to the mandate of INC-3, reflecting the views and positions expressed by the Committee.

We recognize the Chair and his team’s dedication to guiding this process transparently and inclusively, taking into consideration the three informal meetings held with the INC Heads of Delegations (HoD) prior to INC-4, as well as the open dialogue they have fostered with all stakeholders.

As per the INC-3 mandate, the GRULAC’s expectation is to use this Revised Draft Text as the basis for the negotiations, with a view to narrowing the options contained in the text over the next few days. GRULAC strongly advocates for discussions on both provisions and structure, aimed at identifying and building on areas of convergence and bridging gaps in positions, as we forge towards a more streamlined text, with the ambition of reaching an agreement in the upcoming INC-5.

It is therefore imperative that the two Contact Groups and their respective sub-groups as detailed in the Chair’s Scenario Note be established without delay given the limited time available to complete our work.

Whilst most of GRULAC Members have small delegations, we do acknowledge the need for making swift progress at this stage, as we have an extremely complex text before us and few hours of negotiation. In this regard, we are willing to demonstrate flexibility in support of the Chair’s proposal of having up to three groups meeting simultaneously, on an exceptional basis,
and with the assurances that the organization of work will be transparent and communicated in a timely manner.

In terms of the proposed Legal Drafting Group to be established by the Committee at INC-4, GRULAC supports this undertaking, to ensure that as we make substantive progress, the text is reflected in a legally sound manner, as soon as possible.

Mr. Chair,

As GRULAC, we would like to reiterate, our commitment to developing an ambitious and effective International Legally Binding Instrument to end plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, that takes into consideration the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda; and the protection and promotion of human rights, including the rights to health and to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.

The Instrument shall be based on a comprehensive approach that addresses the full life cycle of plastics, and shall include obligations, control measures, and voluntary measures, taking into account, national circumstances and capabilities of developing countries, and be supported by sufficient and robust Means of implementation. We are convinced that this will contribute to addressing the interlinked environmental crises such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, which disproportionately affect developing countries.

The Instrument, must be guided, by the key principles of international environmental law, including the Principles of the Rio Declaration, on Environment and Development; just transition, including an inclusive transition for waste-pickers; by the promotion and protection of Human Rights as a cross-cutting guiding principle; a gender perspective; intergenerational equity; non-discrimination; access to Information, transparency and accountability; coherence among existing MEAs and the use of the best available science, traditional knowledge, knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local knowledge systems.

The objective and the scope must be guided by the mandate given by UNEA Resolution 5/14, and not be repetitive. Regarding definitions, we support the inclusion of terms that are strictly necessary to give clarity on the obligations and to facilitate the implementation of the Instrument.

In addition, the future Instrument should promote decent work throughout the entire value chain of plastics, especially to protect workers from occupational health hazards in the plastics sector, including waste-pickers and other workers in informal and cooperative settings. We should ensure that the transition is just and inclusive for waste pickers, as well as to empower them as active stakeholders of sustainable development. It should also acknowledge the contributions and special challenges of Indigenous Peoples, local communities and other groups in situations of vulnerability.

GRULAC stresses the need of advancing the discussions on the provisions related to polymers and chemicals of concern as well as problematic and avoidable plastic products; also, on the identification of global criteria for the elaboration of initial lists to be considered by the Committee.
Inclusive, formal intersessional work is needed to have more clarity and to build bridges on those technical issues as well as on Means of Implementation, that are essential to achieve an ambitious Instrument.

Our work must continue to be informed by the best available science, which will also be central once the Instrument enters into force. In this regard, the establishment of a scientific and technical subsidiary body of a multidisciplinary composition, with equitable geographical representation and gender balance will be critical.

Developing countries have multidimensional needs, and we would like to highlight that all GRULAC countries are developing countries, with consideration for the unique vulnerabilities and circumstances of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). We wish to reiterate the need for a strong dedicated financial mechanism, which may include but not be limited to the creation of a new fund, new and additional financial resources, capacity building, technical assistance programs, technology transfer, that constitute robust Means of Implementation to effectively support us in implementing the future Instrument.

Moreover, we recognize the value of the Basel and Stockholm Conventions Regional and Subregional Centres, as well as, Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans and their respective Protocols and Centres, which are conducting work and implementing plans on plastics. In that sense, we call for the use of existing Regional and Subregional Centres as appropriate, to aid effectiveness of the future Instrument, while strengthening the regional delivery of technical assistance; whilst also fostering coordination, cooperation, and collaboration among other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).

In the interest of moving swiftly towards substantive negotiations, and following the advice of our esteemed Chair, our delegations will keep their national interventions brief or will submit them in writing.

Finally, GRULAC will continue to work constructively with all stakeholders to advance substantially in the development of an international legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution, including in the marine environment; safeguarding our environment and protecting human health for present and future generations.

I thank you.