

Fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment (INC-5)

**GROUP OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES (GRULAC)
OPENING STATEMENT**

November 2024 – Busan, Republic of Korea

Mr. Chair,

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

Firstly, we would like to thank the Government of the Republic of Korea for hosting this important meeting and to congratulate, once again, Ambassador Luis Vayas Valdivieso, Chair of the INC, and commend him and his team for the work accomplished, as well as the INC Secretariat for organizing this session.

We recognize the Chair's dedication guiding this process in a transparent way, taking into consideration the open dialogue with our region and the informal INC Heads of Delegations (HoD) meetings.

The GRULAC supports the Chair's recommendation on the way forward reflected in the Scenario Note, to use the Non-paper 3 as the basis of the negotiations at the INC-5. Nevertheless, we recognize the need to include some key elements that were not considered, to develop treaty text in some provisions and to improve others.

Moreover, while we make substantial progress, the Legal Drafting Group must ensure that the text is reflected in a legally sound manner. GRULAC recognizes the financial efforts that the negotiation rounds entail but regrets that there has been no financing for legal experts proposed by developing countries.

GRULAC would like to highlight that at INC-5 we should agree on all substantial matters and that only the operational aspects can be left to the interim period.

Mr. Chair,

Plastic pollution is a global concern and an urgent crisis that we must address, cognizant of the need to protect human health and the environment from its adverse effects, with special consideration to the needs of developing countries and persons in vulnerable situations.

As GRULAC, we would like to reiterate, our commitment to develop an ambitious and effective International Legally Binding Instrument to end plastic pollution, including in the marine environment based on a comprehensive approach that addresses the full life cycle of plastics, which shall include obligations, control measures, and voluntary measures and be supported by sufficient and robust Means of implementation.

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 establishment of global criteria for the elaboration of lists.

The Instrument must be guided by the key principles of international environmental law, including the Principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and just transition. It also must incorporate an inclusive transition for waste-pickers; access to information, transparency and accountability; coherence among existing MEAs and the use of the best available science, among others.

It is equally important that it takes into consideration the rights to health and to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment; the unique vulnerabilities and special circumstances of Small Island Developing States (SIDS); as well as the national circumstances and differentiated capabilities of developing countries.

Furthermore, we underline that 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. Just transition may depend upon adequate means of implementation being provided and we should ensure that the transition is just and inclusive for waste pickers and other workers in informal and cooperative settings.

Environmentally sound waste management and improved infrastructure are crucial for our region, and it has been agreed that this Instrument needs to secure external financial, technical and technological support for the improvement of waste management systems. Waste management must be linked to and integrated with broader measures to protect human health and the environment, especially for vulnerable groups.

GRULAC advocates that the Instrument should promote sustainable production and consumption, evaluate safe substitutes, and implement strategies like Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) where feasible and restrictions on single-use, avoidable and unnecessary plastic products, all tailored to national circumstances and capacities.

GRULAC further stresses that this Instrument must address the remediation of existing plastic pollution including in the marine environment, through collective efforts, international cooperation, and resource provision and mobilization; whereby enhancing coordination with relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), is crucial for

addressing pollution in areas beyond national jurisdiction, which requires a distinct legal and technical approach.

It is fundamental to use the best available science to make informed decisions and to be able to update the Instrument after each COP with the new scientific findings. In this regard, the establishment of a scientific and technical subsidiary body of a multidisciplinary composition, with equitable geographical and gender representation will be critical.

Once again, we would like to stress that developing countries have multidimensional needs, and that all GRULAC countries are developing countries. A strong dedicated financial mechanism is needed to implement the new Instrument, especially in developing countries, which may include but not be limited to the creation of a new fund, new and additional financial resources, capacity building, technical assistance, technology transfer and international cooperation.

Additionally, we are convinced that this Instrument will contribute to filling the gaps of international environmental law and will strengthen, at the same time, other MEAs like the Basel and Stockholm Conventions, Regional Seas Conventions, among others. Coherence, coordination and cooperation must be fostered. In this line, we call for the use of Regional and Subregional Centres as appropriate, to effectively strengthen regional implementation, delivery of technical assistance and capacity building.

Undoubtedly, this Instrument will contribute to addressing the interlinked environmental crises, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, which disproportionately affect developing countries.

Finally, GRULAC will strive to make its utmost effort to achieve 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