Statement by the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) at INC-4

Agenda Item 4

Ottawa, Canada – 23 April 2024

Delivered by: Vanuatu on behalf of the Pacific Small Island Developing States

Mr. Chair,

Vanuatu has the honor to speak on behalf of the 14 Pacific Small Island Developing States. We align ourselves with the statement delivered by Samoa on behalf of AOSIS as well as by Vietnam on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group.

We acknowledge the traditional territory of the First Nations and give our gratitude to the people of Ottawa and the Government of Canada for their hospitality, and we commend the continued outstanding support provided by the INC Secretariat.

Mr. Chair,

We acknowledge the preparation of the revised zero draft and contributions made by members and observers that has resulted in progress on the negotiations thus far. It is important to highlight that many delegates from the Pacific Small Island Developing States have travelled great distance to participate in this negotiation. This attests to the importance of these talks for PSIDS and re-emphasizes the PSIDS commitment to ending plastic pollution and defending our beautiful island States from further environmental harm.

The impacts of plastic pollution on PSIDS, coupled with the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss have put a strain on already struggling economies and the limited capacity of PSIDS to address these issues domestically. Science confirms the critical urgency with which the international community must address plastic pollution. Effective cooperation is critical to prevent further environmental degradation from plastic pollution, and this is highly dependent on international legally binding measures to ensure appropriate and relevant actions are taken and sufficient financing is made available.
Key elements in achieving these ambitious common objectives include:

1. reductions in Primary plastic polymers and overproduction of plastic products;
2. prevention of harmful chemicals from being used in any plastics that are produced;
3. harmonized marking and labelling;
4. criteria for sustainable design and traceability of chemicals;
5. the use of the relevant traditional knowledge and practices of Indigenous Peoples and of local communities, with full respect for their rights, as a complement to the best available science in understanding and tackling plastic pollution;
6. Cross Cutting requirements for transparency, information exchange and cooperation; and
7. comprehensive finance package with robust financing mechanism for the effective implementation of the binding measures coupled with technology transfer, technical assistance, and capacity building.

Criteria for sustainability must consider the full life cycle analysis of plastics, taking into account the potential impacts on the environment, economic, socio-economic cultural and human health impacts, including for food security as well as impacts in the marine environment. We stress, however, that downstream measures will not be enough to tackle plastic pollution if we do not address plastics overproduction upstream.

Plastics Treaty is fundamental to addressing these factors. Currently, there are approximately 16,000 chemicals known to be used in plastics, yet only around 4% of these chemicals associated with plastics are regulated under existing MEAs, of which not all countries are party to. While the Stockholm Convention only covers Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and takes several years to list new POPs meeting specific criteria. The Minamata Convention and Montreal Protocol solely address the chemicals used in plastic production, and the Basel Convention focuses on products, rather than chemicals or plastic polymers, only regulating the trade of plastic waste. At the global level, there is no binding instrument that regulates plastic polymers.

Mr. Chair,

Our special circumstances as SIDS may make us different, but they do not take away our potential to partner as equals, collaboratively pursuing mutually beneficial outcomes for our countries, people, and the future we desire. While we acknowledge the complexities of respecting the views of all states, the extensive and interconnected challenges posed by pollution to people and the planet demands urgent attention from the entire international community. Tackling plastic
pollution is an integral part of this, necessitating legally enforceable measures to ensure a unified response across States. As we continue to mitigate and adapt to the environmental and climate crises, a matter of urgency for the PSIDS, both preventative and responsive legal measures are and will remain of fundamental importance.

PSIDS support the proposed method of work and would encourage immediately turning to Contact Groups and subgroups so that we can engage with other delegations and start streamlining the text. We support your proposal on limiting parallel meetings which allows our smaller delegations to cover negotiations effectively. Having said that, time is of the essence and there are some matters which require dedicated space for discussion, so we would like to see the formalization of an Intersessional Work Program as soon as possible to meet our mandate and finalise this text by INC5. The PSIDS are committed to resolving issues by consensus to the greatest degree possible, however we consider it important that the INC be able to take decisive action as needed.

We look forward to a constructive week ahead, to which the group will make vital contributions in making sure our position as a region is captured. Once again, on behalf of PSIDS, I thank you for the revised zero draft and we look forward to working collaboratively with the other regions to progress discussions in a timely and efficient manner.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.