Opening Statement by Samoa on behalf of the 39 Small Island Developing States at the Fourth Session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) to develop a legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment

23 April, 2024

Mr Chair,

Samoa is honored to deliver these remarks on behalf of the 39 Small Island Developing States.

Firstly, we would like to acknowledge that we are gathered on the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin People and extend our sincerest gratitude to them, to the Government and all people of Canada for their warm hospitality and generosity.

We also take this opportunity to thank the Chair, his team and the INC Secretariat for their diligent efforts in making all preparations and arrangements to help facilitate our participation here this week in the capital city of Ottawa.

Further, we welcome the revised draft text of the international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, as a basis for negotiations, and convey our thanks to the Chair for convening the three (3) informal Heads of Delegations’ consultations in preparation for INC-4. These discussions served as useful exchanges of member states' views on key issues in this process.

We reiterate our commitment to this process and our goal to complete the work of the INC by the end of 2024, recognising the pivotal role this agreement will play in the global concerted effort to address yet another environmental crisis that SIDS are disproportionately affected by, but contribute minimally to. It is well established that SIDS have special circumstances given our geographic challenges, limited resources and vulnerabilities to external economic shocks. As SIDS we are on the frontlines of the triple planetary crisis of pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss, and the risks to our livelihoods, economies, health, and environment.

Throughout the negotiations, and in line with Resolution 5/14, SIDS have repeatedly called for an ambitious, effective and equitable international legally binding Instrument that addresses a full life-cycle approach to end plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. Moreover, the agreement must be supported by new, additional, adequate, and predictable means of implementation. This must include a robust financial mechanism, which advances just transition and provides specific support provisions for SIDS, including priority access to fast tracked resources, technology transfer, technical assistance and capacity building.

An effective instrument for SIDS means that there must be comprehensive regulation of hazardous, problematic, and avoidable chemicals and polymers used in plastic production, and plastic products, including single use plastics and microplastics - where the strength of the obligations should depend on the level of harm.

We must also consider the possibility of cooperating and/or coordinating with existing relevant frameworks or conventions, as appropriate.

Global harmonised standards in key areas will be essential to ensure high ambition, as well as inclusive and transformative actions by all.
Moreover, we remind states that Resolution 5/14 also prescribes for the reduction of existing plastic pollution. For SIDS the instrument must include a mechanism for the remediation of existing plastic pollution in the marine environment, including in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Mr Chair, at this critical juncture in the negotiations, and with our final session fast approaching, formal intersessional work is not just a consideration for SIDS, it is an absolute necessity to advance this process. AOSIS has developed and shared an intersessional work proposal to support further discussions on key areas. We look forward to engaging with members on this proposal in the coming days.

As we approach the convening of contact groups and sub-groups, we call for clear and transparent instructions and mandates to co-chairs and co-facilitators, with consideration for small delegations such as ours in the organisation of our discussions. We urge colleagues to utilize our time efficiently here in Ottawa to reach convergence on key elements that would drive meaningful progress toward Busan.

Finally, SIDS remains committed to maintaining constructive and productive discussions on a future agreement that is inclusive, ambitious, equitable and innovative.

I thank you.

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