Statement by the Pan African Health Professionals Organisation (PAHPO) for INC-4

Introduction

The Pan African Health Professionals Organisation (PAHPO), established in March 2020, is a non-profit, non-governmental organization dedicated to improving healthcare across Africa. We recognize the significant threat plastic pollution poses to human health and the environment.

We commend the efforts of the INC to develop a legally binding instrument to address plastic pollution, specifically in the marine environment. PAHPO urges strong action to tackle plastic pollution within the healthcare sector and beyond.

Impact of Plastic Pollution on Health

The healthcare sector is a major contributor to plastic waste, particularly through single-use consumables in operating theatres. This plastic waste not only pollutes the environment but also poses significant health risks. Leaching chemicals from plastic medical supplies and packaging can disrupt hormones, contribute to weight gain and metabolic disorders, and potentially increase the risk of cancer and reproductive problems.

Furthermore, microplastics, tiny plastic fragments resulting from plastic breakdown, have been found to damage human cells, potentially leading to cancers, lung disease, and birth defects. These effects highlight the urgent need to address plastic pollution to safeguard public health.

PAHPO Recommendations
• **Research on Plastic Pollution and Health**: We advocate for increased research into the link between plastic pollution and human health. This research will inform policy decisions and guide efforts to mitigate health risks associated with plastic waste.

• **Policy on Food, Health, and Medical Packaging**: Policies are needed to promote sustainable alternatives for food, health, and medical packaging. This includes encouraging the use of biodegradable or reusable materials and phasing out single-use plastics.

• **Sustainable Medical Waste Management**: We urge the development of comprehensive strategies for sustainable medical waste management. This could involve promoting waste reduction, sterilization and reuse of appropriate medical equipment, and exploring innovative solutions for safe disposal of non-reusable plastics.

• **Subsidies for Plastic Recycling Companies**: Governments should consider subsidizing plastic recycling companies to incentivize efficient recycling infrastructure. This will not only reduce plastic waste but also create new economic opportunities.

• **Integrating health institutions, pharmaceutical companies and other healthcare stakeholders with all INC, UNEP programmes.**

**Conclusion**

PAHPO calls for decisive action to tackle plastic pollution at its source. We believe that a strong international agreement, coupled with national and regional policies, can significantly reduce plastic waste and protect public health across Africa and globally. We stand ready to collaborate with policymakers and stakeholders to achieve this goal.

**SECRETARIAT**  
PAN AFRICAN HEALTH PROFESSIONALS ORGANISATION (PAHPO)