Kingdom of Tonga

Statement by Mr. Sione ‘Akau‘ola, Chief Executive Officer for the Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change and Communications.

Opening Plenary for the Fourth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including marine environment (INC-4)

Tuesday, 23 April 2024 at 10:00 a.m.
Shaw Centre in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the Government and the People of the Kingdom of Tonga. We congratulate your appointment as incoming Chair, and we affirm our full support to you as you lead us on this important process. We applaud the commendable work of you and your team, as well as the Secretariat in their tireless efforts in preparation and arrangements of this important meeting as we welcome the revised text. I would like to extend our gratitude to the Government and People of Canada for their warm hospitality.

Our statement is in alignment with that delivered on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group, AOSIS and the Pacific Small Island Developing States.

Plastic pollution has been a significant issue for Tonga, with the entry of potentially harmful pollutants into our land, air and oceans. It is a combination of chemicals and waste, most of which comes from land and sea sources and is littered, washed or blown into our oceans. This pollution results in damage to the environment, which ultimately affects our source of food, livelihoods and wellbeing.
Tackling plastic pollution through a comprehensive approach across the full lifecycle of plastics, while taking into account national circumstances and capacities, where necessary, should be reflected throughout this instrument.

The adoption of the 3R concept; reduce, reuse and safe recycling of plastic products, and support for research and innovation to develop safe alternatives to replace single-use plastics are necessary to prevent and reduce plastic pollution.

Existing international legally binding instruments should be further explored and to mainstream with our efforts to address plastic pollution effectively and efficiently.

Tonga is on the path to phasing out of single-use plastics, with the soon adopted National Roadmap. The roadmap will provide a clear pathway for targeted actions to achieve a cleaner environment and improve environmentally sound waste management.

To conclude Chair, Tonga remains committed to progressively address issues in relation to plastic pollution, and to ensure that the instrument we develop would mutually benefit our countries, people, and the future we want. An effective instrument, respecting national circumstances, backed by a full and accessible financial package with sufficient implementation resources.

We look forward to a constructive and successful week ahead.

Thank you Chair.