Tunisian Statement at the start of the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop a legally binding international instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.

Ottawa, Canada April 23, 2024

Mr Chair,

Excellences and distinguished delegates,

Tunisia would like to express its thanks to UNEP and the Government of Canada for graciously hosting the fourth meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-4) in Ottawa. We also thank the INC Chair, Bureau and Secretariat for their efficient organisation of this event and their outstanding leadership. We look forward to a successful outcome of our fruitful collaboration.

Tunisia aligns itself with the statement made by Ghana on behalf of the African Group.

On behalf of Tunisia, we consider the elaboration of the Revised draft text as a working basis for the development of the legally binding, global instrument to end plastic pollution, including binding obligations and the necessary means of implementation.

Tunisia reiterates the importance of a comprehensive approach across the full life cycle of plastics, covering primary plastic polymer production, additive materials, product design and waste prevention and management. Plastic pollution poses a considerable threat to all ecosystems, human health, socio-economic stability and climate change, given the high carbon footprint generated during the entire life cycle of plastics and even during recycling. Tunisia is therefore calling for the future instrument to include global bans and phase outs of the most polluting plastics, including chemicals and polymers of concern, as well as high-risk plastic products, while at the same time reducing the global production and consumption of plastics to sustainable levels, as part of a system of transparency and traceability of plastic components.

At INC-4, Tunisia suggests strengthening and streamlining specific texts for prioritised control measures, including binding, global bans and phase-outs and to eliminate problematic avoidable plastic products, and chemicals of concern and; binding, global requirements on product design and transparency measures to ensure reduction, safe reuse and recycling for all plastic products. There is also a need to further specify key elements for means of implementation, including a robust financing mechanism, technology transfer, technical assistance, and capacity building. Finally, we need to advance and streamline texts for monitoring and reporting, periodic assessments; and mechanisms for a scientific body to support the strengthening of the instrument over time.

In addition, as we give priority to substantive discussions, this instrument should incorporate the principles of the Rio Declaration, including the widely accepted international principles, such as the polluter pays principle, the precautionary principle and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. In the discussions and negotiations of the provisions of the future treaty, this instrument should be in synergy with existing agreements. The implementing of the future instrument may lead to job and livelihood losses, as well as other socio-economic impacts along the plastic value chain. The instrument should consider the national circumstances and priorities and ensure a just, equitable, inclusive and resilient transition for
affected populations, with particular attention to vulnerable groups including women, children, young people and waste pickers.

In the global effort to combat plastic pollution, it is essential to recognise that not all nations have the same resources, capacities and skills to deal effectively with this pressing issue. Many vulnerable developing countries, particularly those with limited financial and technical resources, face significant challenges in tackling plastic pollution on their own. This is why Tunisia stresses the need for a Multilateral Fund, which should be the main international mechanism for providing the necessary technical and financial resources. This Fund must be predictable, sustainable and provide adequate technical and readily accessible financial resources to countries that need to meet their commitments under the future instrument. The future instrument should facilitate the exchange of information, capacity building, international cooperation and coordinate the best available science on sustainable consumption and production, research, technologies and indigenous knowledge.

Tunisia acknowledges that this list of key priorities is extensive and we urge the Committee to agree on a mandate for formal intersessional work to advance the text of these priorities including the elaboration of annexes to outline criteria and initial lists for problematic and avoidable plastic products and chemicals of concern. Furthermore, we support the establishment of the Legal Drafting Group to support finalisation of text where considerable progress has been made during INC-4.

In conclusion, Tunisia urges the Committee to agree on an approach and mandate to develop a full draft of the treaty text before INC-5 to ensure that we achieve the task as set out by UNEA Resolution 5/14 to finish our work by the end of 2024.

Thank you for your kind consideration.