Statement of Basel Action Network for Plenary (Agenda Item 4)

Jim Puckett -- I was third on the sign-up sheet at registration desk on Monday.

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Thank you Mr. Chair:

Good morning delegates.

Plastic is fossil hydrocarbons to which a variety of chemicals have been added. At the outset of its creation plastics and its byproducts threaten our climate through subsequent carbon releases, and human and planetary health via direct contact, off-gassing, via residue leaching, from air emissions, incinerator ashes, and microplastics as toxic byproducts. Distinguished delegates, these are the kinds of contaminants that once introduced into the biosphere, disperse themselves and proliferate beyond our control. This constant and widespread contamination cannot be seriously addressed by downstream management whether it be sequestering, mitigation or recycling.

In these last 75 years in which we have lived with plastic, it has become obvious that we are never going to recycle or mitigate our way out of the plastic crisis in which we find ourselves. Recycling the massive volumes and varieties of plastic we produce each day is only marginally technically possible, only marginally economically possible, only marginally safe and environmentally sound. We now understand clearly, that plastic is in fact not an inherently circular material and merely repeating that term and dream will not make it so. There is thus no bandage approach that will serve to cure this earthly injury. The only realistic solution is preventing the injury in the first instance.

Thus, what we must do now, this day on earth, this week in Paris, is to look upstream and take action at the source of the problem -- actions to begin to turn off the tap of unrelenting plastics production.

The First of such actions must be to ensure chemical transparency. All of us have the right to know and the need to know, what is in the plastics we are consuming -- all of the polymers, all of the additives and all of their effects. This treaty must, as a prerequisite, require producers to finally submit this information to us all. In this way, and based on independent science, we can prioritize our preventative action.

Next, once we achieve chemical transparency we can proceed to create a science-based hierarchy of harm, and a hierarchy of inappropriate usage. Starting with the most harmful and the most inappropriate and unnecessary plastics, we must then, set in motion mechanisms to phase out their production, their use and trade, in favor of substitution with non-plastic, least plastic, and alternative systems and technologies.

Distinguished delegates, we hope that this week, we will remember to turn around, face upstream, and get busy solving the plastic crisis at its source. It is time to turn-off the toxic plastic tap. I thank you.

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