Mr. Chair,

I am honored to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean Countries (GRULAC).

We would like to thank the Republic of Kenya and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for hosting this important meeting. In addition, we would like to commend the Chair Amb. Gustavo Meza Cuadra, his team and the INC Secretariat for their diligent preparation of the Zero Draft, which fully responds to the mandate given at INC-2 and reflects the deliberations and views expressed at INC-1 and INC-2. We welcome the Zero Draft as a basis of negotiation for this session. Furthermore, we would like to welcome the upcoming Chair from our region, Amb. Luis Vayas Valdivieso, to lead this important process.

In this regard, our expectation is to spend this week on substantive discussions and deliberations. For that purpose, the swift establishment of the Contact Groups is imperative, as we seek to respond to our mandate to deliver the instrument by INC-5.

As GRULAC Members with small delegations, given our limited resources, we welcome and support the proposal from the Chair, that no more than two contact group meetings will be held at the same time. In addition, should informal consultations, on specific issues of their mandates be convened, no more than two meetings will be held at the same time across the INC. As a region, we kindly request that this approach be kept throughout the INC process.

Recalling Resolution 5/14, GRULAC would like to reiterate, our commitment to developing an ambitious and effective International Legally Binding Instrument to end-plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, with the view to protect human health and the environment. Our instrument must contain obligations and control measures that cover the full lifecycle of plastics and, complemented by voluntary measures, taking into account national circumstances and capabilities of developing countries, and be supported by robust means of implementation. In addition to these, the instrument must promote circular
economy approach and international cooperation, that will result in sustainable production and consumption of plastics, research and innovation, education, and public awareness-raising.

We stress and support that all GRULAC countries are developing countries and as such are entitled to and should be provided new and additional financial resources, transfer of technology, capacity building and all means of implementation that will assist them implementing the new instrument.

We also highlight the unique vulnerabilities and circumstances of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), which are disproportionately affected by the plastic pollution crisis in spite of contributing very little to its creation.

This is by no means an easy task, but we are confident that it can be achieved.

Mr. Chair,

Plastic pollution adversely affects our health, ecosystems, the economy, the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, and the enjoyment of human rights, including the rights to health and to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, as interlinked to other environmental crises such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, impacting developing countries the most. This is a major concern in our region.

GRULAC firmly believes that key principles of international environmental law should guide the interpretation and implementation of the instrument provisions including the Rio Principles, as per the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. Additionally, it should be guided by the principles of just transition, including an inclusive transition for waste-pickers; the promotion and protection of Human Rights as a cross-cutting guiding principle; a gender perspective; intergenerational equity; non-discrimination; access to Information, transparency and accountability; coherence among existing MEAs and the use of the best available science, traditional knowledge, knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local knowledge systems.

In addition, the future instrument should promote decent work throughout the entire value chain of plastics, including waste-pickers and other workers in informal and cooperative settings, especially to protect workers from occupational health hazards in the plastics sector; as well as communities, exposed to multiple harmful chemicals applied in the manufacturing of plastics. We should ensure that the transition is just and inclusive for waste pickers and recyclers, as well as to empower them as active stakeholders of sustainable development.

Science must be central to the effective implementation of the instrument, and the establishment of a scientific and technical subsidiary body will be critical. This body must be of a multidisciplinary nature and have equitable geographical representation and gender balance.

GRULAC supports the identification and adoption of criteria to determine hazardous chemicals and additives, plastic polymers, and plastic products that negatively impact human health and the environment, to ensure a circular economy approach, to improve product design, eco-
design and sustainable consumption and production, as well as to evaluate accessible, affordable, safe and environmentally sound substitutes, alternative materials and technologies will be essential to deliver an effective instrument. The aforementioned, will require the development of a strong scientific basis guided by expert assessments and ensuring transparency from all stakeholders, including the private sector.

Means of implementation are pivotal aspects of our negotiation, the GRULAC calls for a robust financial mechanism which may include but not limited to the creation of a new fund, synergies with existing MEAs, the provision of technical assistance programs and schemes on technology transfer in mutually agreed terms to effectively support developing countries in the implementation of the future instrument.

Moreover, a phased approach in implementation of the instrument by developing countries is imperative as the international community will commence the implementation of the instrument from diverse starting points.

As the main outcome of this negotiation round we would like to move forward agreeing on a mandate to the Chair to develop the First Draft of the instrument in the upcoming intersessional period, based on the views expressed by countries in this meeting. Furthermore, a formal intersessional process is required to discuss means of implementation, technical aspects related to control measures, criteria for chemicals, polymers, and plastic products. Whereas, the discussion on principles and definitions, should be advanced at INC-3.

In the interest of moving directly towards substantive negotiations, we have decided as a group to keep our national interventions brief and we will send the full texts in written.

Finally, GRULAC looks forward to working constructively with all stakeholders to advance substantially in the development of an instrument to end plastic pollution; safeguarding our environment and protecting human health for present and future generations.

I thank you.