The third session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment (INC-3), 13-19 November 2023 at the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya

Statement by the International Labour Office

Moustapha Kamal Gueye, Director of the Priority Action Programme on Just transitions towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies, International Labour Organization (ILO)

Agenda item No. 4. Preparation of an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment

Your Excellency Ambassador Gustavo Meza-Cuadra, Chair of the INC, distinguished delegates, observers, ladies, and gentlemen,

Addressing the urgent challenge of plastic pollution demands unwavering dedication, ambition, and realism. This collective effort must involve all relevant actors, ranging from governments and employers to trade unions, women, youth, older individuals, persons with disabilities, indigenous and tribal peoples, migrants, and local communities.

The framework should encompass the entire lifecycle of plastics, emphasizing the prevention of harm to worker health while championing the principles of circular economies. A comprehensive framework needs to be founded on social dialogue to best achieve its ambitious objectives.

During this year's International Labour Conference, representatives of governments, employers' and workers' organizations stated that urgent action to advance just transition is an imperative to achieving social justice, decent work, and poverty eradication, and to tackling environmental change, including plastic pollution.

A just transition in addressing plastic pollution involves creating decent work opportunities, including for workers in the informal economy and waste pickers, safe and healthy working environments, providing an enabling environment for enterprises of all sizes, reducing inequality, and leaving no one behind.
In this context, the ILO Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all provide the central reference for policy making and a basis for action.

International Labour Standards represent a sturdy foundation for a future international instrument covering the lifecycle of plastics, ensuring that it comprehensively encompasses the social and safety and health dimensions. The Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work recognises the right of workers to safe and healthy working environments ensuring access to data and prevention from harmful exposures.

The ILO reaffirms its commitment to collaborate with all Member States and observers as we collectively pursue social justice, the promotion of decent work, and just transitions for all in our response to global plastic pollution.

Thank you for your attention.