Statement by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) at INC-3

Agenda item 4

Distinguished delegates,

IMO is the United Nations specialized agency responsible for developing and adopting measures to improve the safety and security of international shipping and to prevent marine and atmospheric pollution from ships. IMO is also the secretariat for the treaties that regulate the prevention of pollution from dumping of wastes and other matter at sea, the London Convention and London Protocol.

Annex V of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), is the global convention that contains requirements for the prevention of pollution by garbage from ships, including fishing vessels and floating platforms.

Since the entry into force in 1988 of MARPOL Annex V, disposal into the sea of all forms of plastics generated during normal ship operations has been prohibited. This prohibition extends to fishing gear disposal and line scraps generated by the repair or operation of fishing gear.

In addition, the 1972 London Convention, and the 1996 London Protocol set the global regulations to prevent pollution from dumping of wastes and other matter at sea, and the dumping of plastics into the sea is also prohibited.

Notwithstanding these requirements IMO has recognized that further action is needed and has adopted a Strategy and Action Plan to Address Marine Plastic Litter from Ships. Ongoing work under the Strategy and Action Plan includes measures to reduce the environmental risk of the transport of plastic pellets by ships and the development of amendments to MARPOL Annex V to make mandatory the marking of fishing gear, in cooperation with FAO.

The work of IMO on these matters is supported by the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP), a joint UN advisory group that has been addressing the issue of marine litter and microplastics since 2010, on behalf of its ten UN sponsoring organizations. This includes the preparation of five reports on various aspects of marine litter, to inform the work of IMO and many of our partners.

In conclusion, IMO is regulating and building capacity on several of the topics under discussion here today, and our regulations have been in place since the 1970s and 80s. We are working within our Strategy and Action Plan, supported by our technical cooperation programme, and partners within the UN system and beyond, to ensure that the implementation of these regulations is strengthened globally.
We remain ready to provide input, advice and technical information to assist the Member States in the deliberations at this and future INC sessions.