Statement by Palau at INC-3

Part II Item 3a - Problematic and avoidable plastic products, including short-lived and single-use plastic products and intentionally added microplastics

14 November 2023 – Nairobi, Kenya

Delivered by: H.E. Ambassador Ilana Seid

Thank you co-facilitator. We align ourselves with the statement made by the Cook Islands.

We produce 300 million tons of plastic each year worldwide, with half of this is for single-use items. To put that in context - that’s nearly equivalent to the weight of the entire human population. And according to the OECD, 91 percent of all plastic isn’t recycled at all. Instead it ends up in landfills or in the environment. Single-use plastics in particular—are traditionally hard to recycle because they fall into the crevices of recycling machinery and therefore are often not accepted by recycling centers. As a result, our plastic throwaway culture is already having a devastating impact on our oceans, our wildlife, and our health.

Palau therefore believes a legally-binding, global provision on Part II Item 3a covers vitally important elements of the Instrument and supports Option 1 in the Zero Draft. This Option would prevent millions of tons of plastic from entering the waste stream each year. It would also exert pressure for companies to innovate, rethink their designs and source sustainable materials. Finally, this option would also help shift consumer mind-sets, as people begin to recognize that exorbitant and avoidable waste is not sustainable.

As a starting point on an initial list of criteria and lists for products, we propose to analyze the policies of the over 100 countries with existing national restrictions or bans. Products such as straws, plastic bags, cotton buds, takeout clamshells, stirrers are commonly restricted or banned, and we can look to existing legislation for scientific, sustainability, and economic considerations for the inclusion of products in our consultations. Palau would also like to call for the inclusion of cigarette filters on this list, as they are the most littered items in the world, harm land and marine eco-systems, are very difficult to collect, and disintegrate into toxic micro-plastics.

On “Intentionally added microplastics,” we similarly support Option 1. Some microplastics, like the microbeads used in facial scrubs inevitably end up in the water, and get eaten by fish; when we consume this seafood, it ends up in our bodies, where the chemicals harm our health.
We note that Annex B will include vital information for the operation and implementation of the item and we should look to intersessional work to create an initial criteria list for consideration, as well as to the agreed definitions for terms relevant to this item. Thank you.