Written Submission from the Latin American Alliance of Food and Beverage Industry Associations (ALAIAB) on Elements Towards an International Legally Binding Instrument to End Plastic Pollution

With 25 associations from 15 countries in the region, the Latin American Alliance of Food and Beverage Industry Associations (ALAIAB) is the representative organization of the food and beverage sector in Latin America and the Caribbean. It actively participates in various areas and consultation processes to promote food security, innovation, safety, and sustainable development. ALAIAB currently holds observer membership in the Codex Alimentarius, the Committee on World Food Security (through the Private Sector Participation Mechanism), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

ALAIAB firmly believes in the importance of fostering dialogue and interaction among all actors in the production system, including the private sector, governments, civil society, academic-scientific bodies, raw material manufacturers, and urban waste pickers, to address the common, complex, and systemic challenges we face. Therefore, we welcome the exchange of ideas and collaboration within the framework of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution (INC), ensuring the effective involvement of all relevant stakeholders in shaping the instrument.

The Latin American and Caribbean food and beverage industry, represented by ALAIAB, is committed and ready to contribute to the discussion on the proposed international legally binding instrument to address plastic pollution. To achieve a comprehensive, gradual, and efficient solution, we recognize the need for a variety of strategies that maximize the recirculation of products and materials while considering the unique characteristics and complexities of plastic reduction.

We also emphasize our sector’s dedication to upholding and promoting human rights, continuously striving to improve and implement sustainable production practices. In line with this commitment, we recognize the importance of addressing plastic pollution through a human rights lens.

Any paradigm shift requires innovative approaches to waste management. We advocate for principles of gradual progress, collaboration, and reasonableness, allowing all actors in the value chain to work together in a coordinated manner.

In conclusion, the Latin American food and beverage industry, represented by ALAIAB, welcomes the call made by the World Environment Assembly in its resolution EA.5/Res.14. We offer the following considerations:

- The instrument should be flexible and comprehensive enough to accommodate different treatments, targets, and action plans for various types of plastic materials.
Given the diverse range of polymers involved in current plastic pollution, each type will require specific collection and management mechanisms.

- Reporting mechanisms and action plans must consider national contexts, taking into account the capacities and socio-economic realities of our countries. A "one size fits all" model that disregards national particularities would likely lead to failure. Therefore, technical and scientific reasonableness should guide the development of straightforward methods for information retrieval and submission by all stakeholders.

- Any proposed regulatory approach must ensure equal treatment for all industries, encompassing the entire plastics cycle (upstream, midstream, downstream), and promoting shared responsibility among local governments, the scientific community, private initiatives, the public, and civil society.

- The instrument should incentivize research, development, and innovation projects that facilitate technology transfer and technical assistance, fostering the generation of sustainable alternatives that ensure food quality, safety, shelf life, and transportability. Incentives for scientific activities should be included as a fundamental component of the instrument.

- Latin America has valuable lessons to offer from successful experiences in countries within the region, which have achieved significant recovery and recycling rates through voluntary schemes. We emphasize the importance of acknowledging and building upon these previous experiences and dialogues to strengthen existing best practices. It is crucial to thoroughly explore the range of options that have been available in the region for decades before resorting to over-regulation and fiscal mechanisms.

- To achieve ambitious targets, an effective future instrument will require commensurate means of implementation. Mobilizing economic resources to develop the necessary infrastructure for a circular economy will be necessary.

- The food and beverage industry recognizes the role of design in facilitating the maintenance, collection, sorting, and reuse of packaging. Considering the proactive implementation of changes and improvements in packaging designs over time, mandatory criteria should not be imposed on the design and production of products and packaging.

- The instrument must adopt principles towards a circular economy that promote economic growth, social well-being, and environmental stewardship. It should embrace a cradle-to-cradle approach, emphasizing the reduction, reuse, and recycling of resources to increase material circulation within the economy. Measures should be implemented to respect and promote the human rights of all value chain participants, including urban waste pickers, who play a crucial role in achieving a safe and socially just circular economy.

- The industry emphasizes the importance of incorporating a human rights perspective into the future binding international instrument, focusing on substantive
rights (such as a healthy environment, water, and health) and procedural rights (such as public participation and access to information).

- In line with the pronouncement of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, it is crucial to encourage active, informed, effective, and non-discriminatory participation of all stakeholders throughout the ongoing discussion process. This principle should be cross-cutting in the content of the treaty, as an obligation of States when formulating policies to ensure the sustainable use of plastics.

- If national action plans are considered the vehicle for implementing the treaty’s content, explicit provisions for participation mechanisms must be established for their design, monitoring, and evaluation.

- Reinforcing the duty of prevention of States should consider the following considerations:
  
  i. Recognition of each state’s capacities and contextual differences.
  ii. A gradual approach to requirements.
  iii. Alignment with the economic, political, and social realities of states.
  iv. Active participation of risk assessment within states to determine context-specific and appropriate measures.
  v. Recognition of the need for international cooperation and coordination.

In conclusion, the Latin American and Caribbean food and beverage industry, represented by ALAIAB, reiterates its interest in actively participating in the discussion on an international treaty that tackles the challenge of ending plastic pollution through ambitious global goals and commitments, leading to concrete and measurable outcomes. We are ready to share successful waste management experiences and contribute to the development of effective solutions.

**Contact:**
Juliana Cortez Danese
Director of Public Affairs, Communication and Sustainability of ALAIAB
jcortez@alaiab.org

Más información: www.alaiab.org
LinkedIn: @alaiab