Remarks by the delegation of South Africa under Agenda item 4 (reflections on the zero-draft)

South Africa would like to extend gratitude to the Government and people of Kenya for the warm hospitality. South Africa further extends gratitude to Chairperson of the INC, Ambassador Gustavo Meza-Cuadra for leading and working with the INC Secretariat on delivering the zero-draft.

South Africa aligns with the statement delivered by Ghana on behalf of the 54 African Group member states.

South Africa calls for a scope that is holistic and appreciates the full life cycle of plastic.

On plastic polymer production

It is critical that sustainable development remain at the centre of this instrument. Sustainable consumption and production patterns as underpinned by Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12, are key to sustain the livelihoods of current and future generations pursuant of environmental and development goals.

On chemicals and polymers of concern

The precautionary approach principle has to underpin the measures and it is critical that there is transparency, tracking and sharing of information about the chemicals used in plastic production given the various applications of plastics, including food contact applications. The methods or criteria for justifying the “concern” need to be informed by an evidence-based approach.

On problematic and avoidable plastic products

South Africa supports a science-based approach in the development of the criteria to identify these problematic and avoidable products at the global level.

On Extended Producer Responsibility
In 2020, South Africa operationalised the polluter pays principle and introduced Extended Producer Responsibility obligations for plastic packaging and electrical and electronic equipment amongst other products. South Africa supports mandatory Extended Producer Responsibility for plastic products as part of the controls to end plastic pollution.

On Just transition

South Africa calls for cooperation in the eradication of poverty as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, in order to decrease the disparities in human development and better meet the needs of the majority of the people of the world. It is critical that our efforts in ending plastic pollution should promote and facilitate a fair, equitable and inclusive transition. Special consideration of vulnerable groups is at the centre of South Africa’s considerations. Workers including Waste pickers derive livelihoods from the plastic value chain including the management of plastic waste.

On means of implementation including a financial mechanism

The special situation and needs of developing countries should be given special priority. It is necessary that the developed countries acknowledge the responsibility that they bear in the international pursuit of sustainable development and embrace the operationalisation of the Rio principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) through a new dedicated financial mechanism. A new dedicated financial mechanism that would ensure predictable, sustainable, adequate and accessible financial resources would assist in curbing plastic pollution in developing countries.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the South African delegation acknowledges that there is more that needs to be done during this INC negotiations and as part of the intersessional process towards INC4. The South African delegation stand ready to work with Committee members to make a significant impact on ending plastic pollution.

I thank you