UN-Habitat statement at the Third Session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.

13 to 19 November 2023
Nairobi, Kenya

Intervention as an Observer

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Distinguished Delegates:

I am honored to address the Third Session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on behalf of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-Habitat, the agency dedicated to advancing socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities.

Recognizing the link between rapid urbanization and plastic pollution, we emphasize the pivotal role of local governments in translating global commitments into actionable policies and practices. UN-Habitat stresses the imperative of empowering local governments, particularly in low and middle-income countries, in their efforts to combat plastic pollution through the development of well-resourced and effective solid waste management strategies, managing plastic waste in a safe and environmentally sound manner throughout its lifecycle, encompassing handling, collection, transportation, storage, recycling, and final disposal.

The UN-Habitat Waste Wise Cities Programme, has been instrumental in empowering local governments to adopt sustainable waste management practices, encouraging cities to Rethink, Refuse, Reuse, Reduce, and Recycle waste. The systematic monitoring of SDG indicator 11.6.1, measuring the percentage of municipal solid waste collected and managed in controlled facilities relative to the total municipal solid waste generated by cities, provides a robust foundation for evidence-driven decision-making and practical, impactful interventions.
Acknowledging the scarcity of data for evidence-based policymaking informing effective interventions in combating plastic pollution. UN-Habitat’s Waste Wise Cities programme can serve as a bridge to address this knowledge gap, contributing to the development of countries’ national and local plans. This aligns with the United Nations General Assembly resolution 77/161 on *Promoting zero-waste initiatives to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, emphasizing efforts to minimize and eliminate waste generation and comprehensively address plastic pollution.

Globally, 2.3 billion tonnes of municipal solid waste are generated annually, with only 40% being managed in controlled facilities. Of particular concern is the fact that plastic waste constitutes 12% of global municipal solid waste generation, amounting to 276 million tonnes annually—nearly 80% of the total plastic waste generated. City-level surveys reveal that finance for municipal solid waste management remains insufficient, especially in low- to middle-income countries. This financial shortfall poses a challenge for effective waste management and plastics recovery.

The need for urgent action to establish financial instruments to combat plastic pollution including the implementation of just and inclusive Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) systems to bolster municipal finance for solid waste management and plastic recovery is key.

Recently, UN-Habitat released a report ‘*Leaving No One Behind – How a global instrument to end plastic pollution can enable a just transition for the people informally collecting and recovering waste*’, which advocates for the fair, inclusive, and equitable just transition of the informal waste sector, aiming to generate and preserve decent work opportunities and ensure that no one is left behind. UN-Habitat calls for clarity on how informal waste sector groups can be empowered and delineate clear pathways for their involvement.

In conclusion, UN-Habitat stands ready to support the INC Secretariat, member states, communities, research institutions to contribute to this and subsequent INC sessions by engaging local governments in combatting plastic pollution.

Thank you for your attention.