United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) statement to INC-3

Nairobi, 13 November 2023

Distinguished Chair, Madame Facilitator, dear Members and Colleagues,

UNCTAD would like to express its support for a successful INC process that allows us to agree on a legally binding instrument to respond to the plastic pollution challenge.

According to UNCTAD data, global plastics trade at all levels of the value chain reached $1.2 trillion in 2021. All countries, regardless of their level of development, are involved as producers of consumers in this trade.

This trade is set to continue to grow unless a global treaty to address plastic and related chemical pollution is agreed, ratified, and implemented.

With plastic pollution emerging to a global crisis over the past few years, finding material alternatives and non-plastic substitutes to plastic material has gained urgency.

We were encouraged by President William Ruto’s of Kenya opening remarks, in which he mentioned the importance of non-plastic substitutes and alternatives for enabling innovation, jobs and sunrise industries across Africa. Both UNCTAD’s Secretary General, Ms. Rebeca Grynspan and UNEP’s Executive Director Ms. Inger Andersen support the need to promote innovative, safe, and sustainable non-plastic substitutes as a complementary market solution to efforts addressing limited waste management capacities in member countries.

The UNCTAD Secretariat is pleased to see explicit and separated references to plastic alternatives and to non-plastic substitutes as one of the complementary responses to curb plastic production and consumption.

The market for non-plastic substitutes has been estimated by UNCTAD at $388 billion in 2020. For the UNCTAD Secretariat, non-plastics substitutes offer a readily available natural-based solution that can support the emergence of industries in developing countries and create new green jobs.

Plastic alternatives and non-plastic substitutes also offer a biodegradable, compostable or recyclable material alternative for agricultural inputs production and trade, and to key areas such as textiles, construction and food and beverages sectors, including to the problem of Abandoned, Lost or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear as supported by FAO.

UNCTAD offers to all Member States full support to the development of zero plastics oceans economy and trade strategies as well as sustainable manufacturing capacities of plastic alternatives and non-plastic substitutes under circular economy principles.

Many thanks Mr. Chairman.