Press Release For Immediate Release

UNEA 5.2 CONFERENCE:
SA PLASTICS INDUSTRY RESPONDS TO THE SIGNING OF THE PLASTICS TREATY

Johannesburg, *March 15, 2022.* A historic resolution was reached at the resumed fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5.2) when Heads of State, Ministers of environment and other representatives from 175 nations met in Kenya, Nairobi from 28 February to 2 March 2022 to forge an international legally binding agreement to end plastic pollution by 2024.

The historic resolution, titled *End Plastic Pollution: Towards an internationally legally binding instrument* was described as "a landmark agreement that is the most important international multilateral environmental deal since the Paris climate accord" by Inger Andersen, Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). It aims to dramatically reduce the impact of plastic pollution on the marine environment by looking at the full lifecycle of plastic from source to sea – including how plastic is produced, recycled, processed, used and collected.

Commenting on the outcome of the meeting, Plastics SA Executive Director Anton Hanekom said the resolution made it clear that business plays an important role in ending plastic waste. "Governments are interested in learning about what business is doing to end plastic waste. The resolution appeals to the business community to develop new commitments that will increase the ambition of the global agreement. It also highlights the need for enhanced international collaboration to facilitate access to technology, capacity building and scientific and technical cooperation in order to improve the collection and recycling of plastic waste," he said.

The assembly concluded with 14 resolutions aimed at strengthening collective actions for nature in order to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Prior to the start of the conference, Plastics SA highlighted the importance of recognizing the special needs and circumstances of Africa and analysing the respective capabilities of each country in light of national circumstances.

Explains Hanekom: "You cannot blindly enforce a First World solution on Third World problems. Each country's local and regional context is different, as is the availability of resources to develop and implement effective waste management solutions. It is important to recognise that nations have unique and different socio-political climates that need to be taken into consideration. Plastics continue to be the cheapest, most practical and fit-for-purpose solution for many applications and uses in our country and on our continent. Whether used to save lives in hospitals, incorporated into technology and cars, or extending the shelf life of food by preventing breakage and spoilage, it is almost impossible to imagine any area of our lives that is not enhanced by plastics. When used and disposed of responsibly, plastics even play a major role in ensuring a more sustainable world. We therefore welcome the draft resolution which encourages the public and private sectors to manage a just transition towards a circular economy," Hanekom says.

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Looking ahead, the local plastics industry will continue to collaborate with local Government, industry, civil society, academia and other interested parties to develop creative, but workable solutions to our nation's waste crisis.

Explains Hanekom: "Over the past few decades, we have been pro-active in our efforts to prevent plastic from ending in the environment. We have also been addressing the issues of plastics leakage, overpackaging and developing an effective mechanism for the recovery and recycling of plastics. All of these topics will continue to top our agenda in the years to come. However, the signing of the treaty now potentially grants us access to some of the best minds in the world, greater resources and collective, global action. We look forward to participating in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) as we work together on identifying, developing and implementing solutions that will effect lasting change for generations to come," Hanekom concludes.

For more information on Plastics SA, visit www.plasticsinfo.co.za
For more information on the treaty, visit https://www.unep.org/environmentassembly/unea5

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