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## **SA PLASTICS INDUSTRY CALLS FOR FLEXIBILITY AND COUNTRY-SPECIFIC APPROACHES TO TACKLE PLASTIC POLLUTION AHEAD OF UNEA 5.2 IN NAIROBI**

**Johannesburg, February 24, 2022.** The UN Environmental Assembly will be meeting for their fifth session (UNEA 5.2) in Nairobi, Kenya, next week. Expected to be the most important environmental pact since the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change, the world's environmental leaders will be meeting from 28 February – 2 March to draft a blueprint for a global plastics treaty that will address the issue of marine litter and plastic pollution in the environment.

Given the environmental challenges faced as a consequence of plastic pollution, South Africa's Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) indicated that Government will give its support to the establishment of an Inter-Governmental Negotiating Committee (INC) under UNEA to negotiate an internationally legally binding instrument on plastic pollution.

Commenting on the upcoming UNEA 5.2 conference and South Africa's position, Plastics SA Executive Director Anton Hanekom says they share the vision, passion and driving ambition to prevent leakage of plastic into the environment and achieve universal access to waste collection.

"We fully acknowledge and support the urgency to address the issue of plastic waste in the environment and marine plastic debris. However, we do not believe that this will be successfully achieved by regulating plastic products or production. Plastics can play a valuable and important role in achieving the UN [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) provided that they are responsibly and sustainably produced, used, and recovered in a circular economy," Hanekom says.

The Resolution proposes addressing plastic pollution through the following provisions:

- Establishing as necessary targets, definitions, methodologies, formats and obligations
- Addressing product design and use, including compounds, additives and harmful substances, as well as intentionally added microplastics;
- Promoting national action plans to prevent, reduce and remediate plastic pollution - tailored to local and national circumstances and the characteristics of specific sectors
- Increasing knowledge through awareness-raising and information exchange on best practices to prevent plastic pollution and promote behavioural change;
- Monitoring and reporting on national and international progress on implementation of the agreement;
- Providing scientific and socio-economic assessments and monitoring and reporting on plastic pollution in the environment;
- Cooperating and coordinating with relevant regional and international conventions, instruments and organisations;
- Specifying financial and technical arrangements as well as technology transfer assistance to support the implementation of the convention
- Addressing implementation and compliance issues;
- Promoting research and development into innovative solutions.

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Although it is expected that the agreement will be based on the principles of equity and shared responsibilities, South Africa will be advocating that the special needs and circumstances of Africa be recognised and that the respective capabilities of each country must be analysed in light of national circumstances.

Explains Hanekom: “Each country’s local and regional context is different, as is the availability of funding and other resources to develop and implement effective waste management solutions. It is important to recognise that nations have unique and different socio-political climates that should be taken into consideration. In our opinion, enforcing a one-size-fits-all approach on all countries would be catastrophic and short-sighted. The global agreement should allow for flexibility and room for country-specific approaches. Only by creating inclusive platforms where governments, the industry, civil society, and academia can negotiate and collaborate, will we be able to identify, develop and replicate workable solutions that will ultimately benefit the environment”.

Role-players in the Global plastic industry have proposed a set of [five principles](#) aimed at eliminating plastic waste, accelerating a circular economy for plastics, and serving as the basis for a global agreement. These are:

1. Have all nations agree on eliminating plastic waste, while providing flexibility and support to help meet the needs of individual nations
2. Achieve widespread access to waste collection
3. Recognize the role plastics play in a lower carbon future
4. Support innovation in product design and recycling technology
5. Measure progress

“Plastics SA proposes that countries should be allowed domestic flexibility to develop plans for eliminating plastic waste leakage that are regionally appropriate, based on local circumstances and supported by enabling policies. South Africa needs new, additional and predictable financing, technology transfer and the development of increased capacity to implement our plans. We believe that a global agreement could be used as an opportunity to accelerate the progress that we have already made in this regard. By building a stronger than ever foundation for effective waste management, we can ensure that used plastics are kept in the economy (recovered and recycled) and out of the environment,” Hanekom concludes.

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