

PLASTICS SA ATTENDS GLOBAL INC-1 MEETING AIMED AT ADDRESSING GLOBAL WASTE CRISIS

Johannesburg, 8 December 2022. Plastics SA was part of the Plastics Leadership Group (PLG) which participated in the first of five planned sessions of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-1) held in Punta Del Este, Uruguay, recently. The 5-day gathering was convened by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) with the aim of developing an internationally legally binding instrument on plastic pollution by the end of 2024.. It also set the stage for a two-year-long process that could result in one of the most significant multilateral environmental agreements in history.

Douw Steyn, Plastics SA's Sustainability Director represented the South African plastics industry in these negotiations and reported that the meeting was a mix of high and low moments. "It was a huge privileged to join representatives of the global plastic industry such as the World Plastics Council, Plastics Europe, the European Chemical Industry Council), American Chemistry Council as well as environmentalist, scientists, waste pickers, tribal leaders; governments and others affected by pollution in these talks. Twenty three bilateral meetings with governments and key stakeholders took place during five days, and it was interesting to see how globally we are all grappling with the same issues," Douw said.

Despite the fact that participants were united around the shared goal and vision of how to effectively and responsibly deal with waste, factions also quickly came into focus. As a result the first round of negotiations ended on a split on whether to limit plastic production, phase out types of plastics and harmonise global rules. Some countries pressed for top-down global mandates, some advocating for national solutions and action plans, and others for a combination of both. Other common themes and desired actions which emerged from the INC-1 meeting include:

- Scaling up a circular economy for plastics, where used plastics are captured and remade into new plastics.
- Designing products for circularity.
- Enabling partnerships between the private sector and governments to unlock financing to improve waste management, which serves as the foundation of a circular economy.
- Enhancing transparency on chemical additives.

Another topic that was high on this year's agenda was the use of chemical additives in plastics. Although many governments already rigorously test and regulate chemical additives for safety, the plastics and chemical industries reiterated their commitment to embark on potential pathways to improve transparency of additives used in plastics.

"Additives are essential to the myriad uses of plastics in modern life and play important roles in helping prevent medical equipment from melting during sterilization, enabling wind turbines and solar panels to better withstand the elements, and building vehicles that can absorb more impact so passengers absorb less in an accident. Plastic and chemical manufacturers will continue working with national governments and international negotiators throughout the INC process so additives can be used with confidence and deliver the benefits essential to so many critical products," the [International Council of Chemical Associations \(ICCA\)](#) said in a statement released after the meeting.

Concluded Douw: "Plastic manufacturers all over the world are already transitioning to a circular economy by investing billions in recycling infrastructure and designing plastic products that can be recycled more easily. This global agreement provides an important opportunity to accelerate those efforts by encouraging public-private partnerships, aligning private investment with national goals and actions, and lowering barriers to technology and expertise required for an equitable transition to circularity. Plastics SA and our global partners support these actions and remain constructively engaged to advance solutions, provide industry data where appropriate, and foster a bold agreement that helps eliminate plastic waste in the environment".

For more information, visit www.plasticsinfo.co.za

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PHOTOGRAPHS AND CAPTIONS



Above: Stewart Harris, Senior Director of the American Chemistry Council, representing the plastics industry at the INC-1 talks.



Above: Global industry leaders meet with the SA government (DFFE) delegation.

FLTR: Suzanne Foti (Chevron Philips Chemicals), Mamogala Musekene(DDG DFFE), Tshilidzi Ligaraba (DFFE). Robert Skugland (Covestro), José Ruiz (Exxon Mobil), Stewart Harris (ACC American Chemistry Council), Douw Steyn (Plastics SA) and Dumisani Buthelezi (DFFE)