Press release for immediate release

GLOBAL PLASTICS TREATY TALKS CONCLUDE IN NAIROBI, KENYA, WITH KEY ISSUES UNRESOLVED

Johannesburg, 28 November 2023. The recently held International Negotiating Committee on Plastics (INC3) meetings in Nairobi, Kenya, aimed at crafting a landmark, legally binding global plastics treaty to combat plastics pollution, with specific reference to the marine environment, concluded late on the evening of 19 November 2023, with critical topics left unresolved.

Among the key issues left unresolved is the intersessional work required between INC3 and the upcoming INC4, scheduled to take place in April 2024 in Canada. This intersessional work is crucial for laying the groundwork for more substantive talks at the INC4.

INC3 achieved progress by refining the Zero Draft document, incorporating additional elements necessary to achieve the agreement's overarching goal—ending plastic leakage into the environment, with a particular focus on the marine environment. The primary objective is to establish an equitable and implementable agreement that acts as a catalyst for plastics circularity, promoting better product design, reusability, and improved waste infrastructure.

Plastics SA and the Chemical, and Allied Industries' Association (CAIA) attended as part of the observer stakeholder groups. Both organisations supported the view held by the Global Partners for Plastics Circularity, who underscored demand-side solutions, such as boosting recycled content and enhancing waste collection, embracing the entire lifecycle as well as the circularity principle.

Anton Hanekom, Executive Director of Plastics SA, was part of the South African business delegation that is not supportive of calls made for a broader treaty, encompassing supply-side solutions like reducing plastics production and restrictions on "problematic" plastics or chemicals.

"Modern life would be impossible without plastics. It should be noted that if countries do not consider their context and socio-economic situation holistically, there will be unintended consequences. There was a strong push by some stakeholders for an outright ban of plastics. It was clear from the emotive talks and appeals to ban plastics that many of these advocates are mis-informed about plastics, the ingredients that are used to produce them and the huge progress industry has made over the last two decades to create products that are safe, sustainable, responsible and recyclable".

Hanekom also emphasized the plastics industry's stance on advocating for national autonomy when it comes to developing plans to reduce and clean up plastics pollution. He highlighted the need for funding and supportive policies to implement waste management, especially in regions lacking adequate infrastructure, as ongoing challenges.

"Nobody likes to see litter in the environment. It is important that the solutions that are developed to address this problem, do not end up creating bigger issues for the country, nor must it end up harming the health and well-being of our people, the environment and put thousands of jobs at risk. However, we are in support of the calls for transparency when it comes to chemical additives and products, and the promotion of design for recyclability, added Deidre Penfold, Executive Director of CAIA.

Negotiations concluded with no solid plan. The negotiations highlighted the complexity of balancing diverse interests to create an equitable and implementable global plastics treaty. The unresolved issues confirmed that the need for continued collaboration and dedication is essential as the world strives to address the urgent challenges posed by plastic pollution.

The focus now shifts to more informal intersessional work by countries and preparations for INC4 in April 2024 in Canada, where stakeholders anticipate discussions that are more robust and the formulation of concrete steps towards a comprehensive and impactful global plastics treaty.

This is a process and we will continue engaging with government and business to prepare for engagements in Canada.

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

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