

## POSITION PAPER ON INC TREATY NEGOTIATIONS

# Plastic pollution

has emerged as one of the most pressing environmental challenges of our time, permeating ecosystems from oceans to mountains. As nations grapple with the devastating impacts of plastic pollution, the imperative for a comprehensive, legally binding global agreement becomes increasingly evident, as it was decided during the United Nations' Environmental Assembly in Nairobi 2021. Now, by the end of 2024, more than 190 countries must align their aspirations and commitments to achieve a legally binding agreement on plastic pollution, addressing the entire plastic lifecycle to effect meaningful change.

As PROMAR, an international cooperation project that promotes marine litter prevention through circular economy solutions in eight countries in the Caribbean, we advocate for a comprehensive legal framework that integrates clear definitions, ambitious targets, and robust enforcement mechanisms for dealing with plastic pollution. Drawing on its expertise and experience, PROMAR emphasizes the importance of cross-cutting elements such as just transition, human rights, the precautionary principle and the polluter pays principle in form of EPR regulations in guiding the development and implementation of the agreement. In the following paragraphs, PROMAR aims to lay out its considerations for the future plastic agreement.

Given that the PROMAR implementation countries are Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, the British Virgin Islands, Guyana, Suriname, St. Kitts & Nevis and Trinidad & Tobago, special consideration must be given to the unique circumstances and vulnerabilities of small island states, which are disproportionately impacted by plastic pollution and face distinct challenges in waste management and environmental conservation. Any global agreement should include provisions to support these states in building resilience, enhancing waste management infrastructure, and accessing financial and technical assistance.

In addition to that, the agreement should outline specific targets and timelines for reducing plastic production, consumption, and waste generation. Any global agreement must further establish clear definitions and standards regarding what constitutes plastic pollution. This includes delineating various types of plastic, defining acceptable levels of pollution, and identifying key metrics for assessing progress. Targets must be ambitious yet achievable, grounded in scientific evidence and informed by the precautionary principle.

Furthermore, the precautionary principle, grounded in the best available science and evidence, should underpin decision-making

processes within the legal framework. This principle requires taking preventive action in the face of uncertainty, prioritizing measures to avoid or minimize harm to the environment and human health. By adopting a precautionary approach, the agreement can mitigate the risks associated with plastic pollution and advance a more proactive and preventative agenda.

Moreover, the agreement should prioritize measures to promote innovation and incentivize the development of alternative materials and circular economy models. This may involve creating funding mechanisms for research and development, providing tax incentives for sustainable practices, and fostering international collaboration on technological solutions.

Integral to the success of any global agreement is the establishment of mechanisms for monitoring, reporting, and verification. This includes implementing standardized reporting protocols, establishing independent oversight bodies, and leveraging emerging technologies for enhanced data collection and analysis.

Equally crucial is the integration of social and economic considerations into the legal framework. This entails addressing the disproportionate impacts of plastic pollution on marginalized communities, promoting equitable access to resources and opportunities, and fostering sustainable economic growth. Moreover, any global agreement must uphold human rights principles, recognizing the right to a clean and healthy environment for all, as it's stated under the UNEA Resolution 5/14 entitled "End plastic pollution: Towards an international legally binding instrument". This includes safeguarding the rights of indigenous peoples, marginalized communities, and future generations who are disproportionately affected by plastic pollution. By integrating a human rights-based approach, the agreement can ensure that policies and actions to combat plastic pollution respect, protect, and fulfill the rights of all individuals.

Through its project activities, PROMAR is also supporting the integration of informal waste pickers into formalized systems to provide worker security and a fair waste management infrastructure.

Therefore, a just transition framework must be taken into consideration for the agreement, ensuring that efforts to mitigate plastic pollution do not disproportionately burden vulnerable communities or exacerbate existing inequalities. This involves supporting workers and communities dependent on plastic industries through alternative livelihood opportunities and equitable access to resources.

Furthermore, any global agreement must recognize the interconnectedness of plastic pollution with other environmental challenges, such as climate change and biodiversity loss. This necessitates adopting a holistic approach that synergizes efforts across different policy domains and promotes integrated solutions. Additionally, the agreement should prioritize education, awareness-raising, and public engagement as essential components of any successful strategy to combat plastic pollution. This includes investing in educational programs, promoting behavior change campaigns, and empowering individuals to make informed choices.

Lastly, a bottom-up approach to enforcement is essential for ensuring the effectiveness and legitimacy of measures to address plastic pollution. This involves empowering local communities, civil society organizations, and grassroots movements to actively participate in decision-making processes, monitor compliance with regulations, and hold stakeholders accountable. By fostering local ownership and participation, the agreement can leverage the collective wisdom and resources of communities around the world to drive meaningful change from the ground up. By championing these principles and priorities, PROMAR envisions a future agreement that fosters international cooperation, promotes environmental justice, and catalyzes transformative change towards plastic-free oceans in the future.