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**DIALOGUE ON PLASTICS POLLUTION AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE
PLASTICS TRADE**

STATEMENT OF THE SCIENTISTS' COALITION FOR AN EFFECTIVE PLASTICS TREATY

Pre-Plenary Meeting – 23 November 2023

DOCUMENT DE SÉANCE NON OFFICIEL¹

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* In Original language only/En langue originale seulement/En el idioma original solamente.

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Thank you Chair,
Your excellencies,
Distinguished Members of the WTO,

My name is Professor Trisia Farrelly. I am speaking on behalf of the Scientists' Coalition for an Effective Plastics Treaty - a group of almost 300 plastic pollution researchers located in over 50 countries. Our scientists have declared that the plastic pollution research they are all actively involved in is free of any current professional, financial, or other interest which could significantly impair their objectivity in carrying out their research or that could create an unfair advantage for any person or organization[i]. The goal of the Scientists' Coalition is to facilitate access to the rapidly evolving plastic pollution science for all WTO Members and countries involved in the INCs.

- The Scientists' Coalition Secretariat, Steering Committee, and our dedicated WTO DPP Working Group wish to congratulate the WTO DPP for its crucial contributions to the INC process toward ending plastic pollution.

- We are grateful to the WTO DPP Coordinators for distributing the revised draft of the Ministerial Declaration to all stakeholders. The inclusivity and transparency demonstrated by the WTO DPP is of critical importance and reflects the operationalisation of the Scientists' Coalition. We look forward to contributing further to this process in 2024.

- While the Scientists' Coalition was disappointed that the intersessional work could not find consensus at the third session of the INC, this has only galvanized us to increase our support for WTO members and UN member states during the intersessional period. The Scientists' Coalition are currently discussing the prioritisation of work during the intersessional period. Resources permitting, this is likely to include the development of safety, sustainability and transparency assessment criteria for chemicals associated with plastics and plastic polymers, as well as alternatives and substitutes.

- The Scientists' Coalition have shared our reflections on the Ministerial Declaration with the WTO as well as our outputs thus far including our responses to the Zero Draft text of the future legally binding plastic pollution instrument [ii]. We look forward to sharing future outputs during the intersessional period as well as our reflections on the vital work of the WTO and the INCs. We have shared our position on the necessary assessment criteria in our reflections thus far as well as our preference for the essentiality approach rather than the less scientifically assessable terms 'avoidable' and 'problematic'. The essentiality approach also serves the need for just transition. The Scientists' Coalition promotes hazards-based assessments over risk-based assessments and the need for the application of the precautionary principle in assessing chemicals, materials, products, technologies, and systems and services.

- The recently convened Plastic Health Council presented at INC-3 alerted attendees to the thousands of peer-reviewed academic studies highlighting that exposures to plastic chemicals including those present in plastic alternatives can cause infertility, cancer, cognitive disorders, and auto-immune disease and that plastic particles can induce a variety of toxic effects including oxidative stress, metabolic disorder, immune response, neurotoxicity, as well as reproductive and developmental toxicity, respiratory and lung disease.

- We note that the Ministerial Declaration indicates there is collective agreement on compilations presented in the Declaration. However, it is our understanding that the compilations have not been collectively agreed. Nor are the compilations based on a commonly agreed, scientifically robust scientific and socio-economic set of safety, sustainability, essentiality, and transparency assessment criteria. We also note that the compilations are not based on an agreed glossary of scientifically supported definitions. We hope to see this reflected in the Ministerial Declaration. Ultimately, the Ministerial Declaration shall recognise that such lists should be subject to review following the adoption of the international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.

- We understand that the compilation items are not necessarily recommended items but as noted by the Chair, these are lists that members may **consider**. Therefore, it is also the position of the Scientists' Coalition that, if the WTO is to have all the information necessary for members to **consider** items listed in the compilations, the members will first need to nominate an expert group to develop the necessary assessment criteria for these items before the adoption of the Ministerial

Declaration. The nomination process for such an expert group should be grounded in principles of inclusivity, and transparency and a robust conflict of interest policy. To ensure just transition, the expert group will require sectoral and regional representation as well as invaluable input from Indigenous rights and knowledge holders, citizen scientists, and the informal sector.

- Enabling such a scientifically rigorous approach to the compilations will prevent those considering items in the list from adopting regrettable outcomes and substitutes, further delays, and future complications in the INC process.
 - Finally, the Scientists' Coalition is pleased to see that the Declaration recognises the need for open and adaptable compilations to be regularly reviewed based on "global, regional and domestic efforts, as well as on technical and scientific developments." The review of these compilations should also be conducted so as to ensure alignment between the WTO DPP and the INC process.
- Thank you very much for your time and attention.

Please accept, Excellencies and colleagues, the assurances of our highest consideration.

[i] IPCC. IPCC Conflict of interest policy. 2016.

<https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/09/ipcc-conflict-of-interest-2016.pdf>.

[ii] <https://linktr.ee/scientistscoalition>
