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Treatise on plastics:

Grassroots organizations create Latin American and Caribbean Network for the reduction of plastic production with binding global targets

Ottawa, Canada - In the context of the penultimate negotiation of the United Nations Environment Program's Global Plastics Treaty, grassroots civil society organizations from the Latin American and Caribbean region have formed this Network to express their concern about the promotion of waste management practices and technologies under the argument of a circular plastic economy that have seriously impacted the health of populations and ecosystems.

The objective of the network is to influence the international community on the specific situations and demands of the Latin American region and to warn about the main social, environmental, cultural, economic and health impacts caused by plastic pollution.

In this context, some of the issues of great concern are the false solutions that are promoted under circular economy schemes such as projects, technologies and economic instruments that are presented as alternatives to solve plastic pollution, but which are not really effective, since they operate as a distraction from the real solutions, or worse, their negative effects are more harmful and aggravate plastic pollution. Some of the false solutions are: incineration, co-incineration, co-processing in cement kilns, pyrolysis, chemical recycling, plastic bonds, marine cleaning systems, among others.

In addition, the network's member organizations have called during this week of negotiations in Ottawa, Canada, to support binding global targets for plastic production reductions of no less than 70% based on production from 2019 to 2030. And to exclude false solutions for waste management methods in the Plastics Treaty.

Alejandra Parra of RADA, Temuco, Chile: The formation of this network is a citizen effort to open spaces where we can express our Latin American and Caribbean perspectives. Our territories are especially affected by the impacts of plastics throughout the life cycle, or rather death chain of this toxic material, especially the most vulnerable sectors such as women, children, grassroots recyclers and indigenous peoples. The false solutions hidden behind the concept of circular economy put us even more at risk, increasing vulnerability and exacerbating the environmental, social and economic impacts we already suffer.

Larisa de Orbe of the Mexican Ecological Action Network: at this stage of the negotiations of the Plastics Treaty it is important to ensure that the voices of Latin America and the Caribbean are heard, as our region is directly affected by the consequences of excessive plastic production. Some of these consequences include the problems associated with the export of plastic waste to our countries, which we consider waste colonialism, as well as the false solutions that are imposed in the territories, affecting the lives of communities and intensifying processes of environmental injustice.

María Isabel Cárcamo of RAPAL-Uruguay: It is important that the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee contains strong and legally binding control provisions to protect human health and the environment. To this end, the mandate of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) must be fulfilled and the full life cycle of plastics must be addressed, including measures to control and monitor the volumes of their production. Plastics are carbon plus toxic chemicals, science tells us that all plastic eliminates toxic substances, and these produce extremely negative impacts on health and the environment, the treaty needs to promote alternatives free of toxics, among the solution, do not include chemical recycling, or mechanical as both promote the use and generation of more toxics.

Cecilia Bianco of Taller Ecologista, Argentina: In the case of mechanical recycling, there is great concern that the process accumulates, enhances and concentrates the content of toxic substances in the final products, which are of low quality and durability, affecting consumers, collectors, grassroots recyclers, factory workers, communities, territories and indigenous ecosystems. The process of handling, cleaning and shredding plastics exposes workers to hazardous dust, vapors, viruses and bacteria, including microplastics and nanoplastics. Therefore, mechanical plastic recycling will not solve the problem as long as production levels continue to increase and contain toxic additives.

Zuleica Nycz of Taxisphera, Brazil: The treaty must create the necessary mechanisms to guarantee transparency and traceability of toxic chemicals, in order to ensure rigorous measures are taken throughout the entire life cycle of plastics.

Mechanical and chemical recycling does not meet technical specifications for environmental safety and human health.

Laura Suárez of Fundación PlastiCo. Project, Ecuador: It is precisely at this point in the negotiations where the text will begin to be cleaned up, and it is imperative that contributions and realities are considered from a human rights, gender and intergenerational approach, paying special attention to the voices of Indigenous Peoples, communities of the territories in sacrifice, children and youth, and grassroots recyclers, whose needs and demands must be heard.

The organizations that make up the network are:

Taller Ecologista, Argentina; Red de Acción por los Derechos Ambientales RADA, Chile; Red Mexicana de Acción Ecológica, Mexico; Mar Viva, Costa Rica, Panama and Colombia; Toxisphera, Brazil, Fundación PlastiCo. Project, Ecuador, Red de Acción en plaguicidas y sus alternativas para América Latina, RAPAL - Uruguay.

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