

SA advocates for legally binding instrument on plastic pollution

South Africa will support proposals to address the issue of marine litter and plastic pollution at the upcoming 5th session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA 5.2).



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"South Africa supports the proposal to mandate the Executive Director of UNEP to establish an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) under UNEA to negotiate an internationally legally binding instrument on plastic pollution given the environmental challenges faced as a consequence of plastic pollution," Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment Barbara Creecy said on Thursday.

The Minister hosted a virtual stakeholder engagement ahead of the UNEA 5.2, which has been scheduled to take place in Nairobi, Kenya, from 28 February – 2 March 2022.

The high-level segment of UNEA 5.2 will take place on 2 March 2022 under the overarching theme "Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals".

South Africa will also request the inclusion of the recognition of the special needs and circumstances of Africa and that any potential internationally legally binding global agreement on plastics pollution must include the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in light of national circumstances.

"We will also stress the need for new, additional and predictable finance, including technology transfer, develop and deployment as well as capacity building to support developing countries, in particular Africa for its implementation," the Minister said.

The draft resolution on the internationally legally binding instrument on plastic pollution constitutes a starting point for negotiations, contains necessary elements to be discussed under the negotiations at UNEA 5.2 to establish the mandate on a global plastics agreement for the INC.

The Minister said the current proposal goes beyond addressing only marine plastic litter.

"About 80% of plastics ending up in the seas come from land-based sources, meaning that plastic pollution is not an isolated problem only relevant for our oceans.

"The proponents indicating that addressing a life cycle approach should therefore take into account plastics ending up in all compartments of the environment and the resolution addresses land-based sources as well as sea-based sources; focusing on both upstream and downstream activities and measures," the Minister said.

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