

Statement delivered by Marina Fernandez, PhD, during the plenary session of the first Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.

November 30, 2022

Punta del Este, Uruguay

Thank you Chair,

The Endocrine Society is the world's largest and oldest professional society dedicated to the understanding of hormone systems and clinical care of those with endocrine diseases including a global membership of physicians and scientists from over 120 countries. Our expertise has defined much of what we know about the endocrine system: what hormones are, what they do and how they do it. Our members have advanced our understanding of how chemicals in plastics can interfere with the function of endocrine systems and act as endocrine-disrupting chemicals or EDCs and cause human and ecological health impacts.

Decades of research have explained the connections between plastic additives, including bisphenols, phthalates, and UV-stabilizers; to obesity, diabetes, infertility, and cancer. The science is well-established; however, scientists with discipline-specific expertise should participate in discussions regarding obligations, voluntary approaches, monitoring and evaluation. To reduce exposure to EDCs, the Endocrine Society can provide technical expertise to ensure that the treaty is designed to deliver health and environmental goals.

To evaluate the public health impact of the treaty, we support biomonitoring studies that can evaluate the body burden of plastic pollution, with special consideration for disproportionately impacted countries and communities. We recognize the urgent need to reduce plastic production, particularly for consumer goods. We especially emphasize the science confirming that recycling plastic products that contain EDCs has been shown to concentrate harmful additives, maintaining and possibly increasing hazardous exposures. We therefore urge the INC to include milestones for reducing plastic and hazardous chemical production as part of a comprehensive approach to reduce, reuse, and recycle plastic.

We are encouraged by this important opportunity to address the interconnected goals of reducing pollution and improving health, but we should not overlook that a meaningful reduction in plastic production and use will achieve substantial economic benefits through a reduction in diseases and associated costs. Bisphenols and phthalates have been conservatively estimated to cost the European Union at least € 26 billion per year due to increased disease burden. Moreover,



perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) have contributed to nearly 500,000 cases of low birth weight in low- to middle-income countries, predominantly in Asian countries. We therefore urge participants in the INC to seek ambitious solutions that recognize the urgency of this issue.

Thank you for considering our comments, we look forward to working with the Committee.