QUESTIONNAIRE

I. Core questions for all

1. Please explain in what ways plastics affect human rights. What are the human rights impacts that you associate with the different phases of the full life-cycle of plastics (e.g., during extraction of raw materials; during production of primary plastic precursors, design and production of plastic products; during packaging and distribution; during use and maintenance; and during recycling, reuse, recovery or final disposal)? Where possible, please provide concrete data, studies, etc.

Plastic products, including those made of plastic intended for contact with food, have a significant impact on the environment and natural ecosystems. Their decomposition process takes hundreds of years, during which plastic accumulates in soil, water bodies, and seas, blocks sanitation systems, and reduces soil fertility. Microplastic and nanoplastic particles formed during decomposition easily spread through air, water, and soil, settle on riverbeds and seabeds, and enter the food chain, leading to a reduction in biodiversity and disruption of ecological balance. The accumulation of plastic waste damages marine and coastal ecosystems and poses a threat to both aquatic and terrestrial animals, which often ingest or become entangled in plastic debris. These processes negatively affect not only the natural environment but also economic sectors - fisheries, tourism, and agriculture are all impacted. As a result, plastic consumption leads to the degradation of ecological systems and hinders the country's sustainable development.

Several projects have been carried out nationwide to diagnose plastic pollution. In particular, with financial support from the World Bank, the project "Blueing the Black Sea: Reducing Marine Plastics Pollution in Georgia" identified plastic pollution hotspots in the Rioni River basin and its tributaries (Pichora, Kvirila, Dzirula, and Tskhenistskali), and conducted both quantitative and qualitative assessments of waste. A pilot study conducted using drones showed that approximately 88% of the river's waste consists of plastic, the majority of which comes from single-use plastic products. Among these, plastic bottles account for 41%, while their caps make up 18%. These wastes create significant environmental and economic risks, requiring prompt and effective response.

Assessments conducted across 13 sites in the Rioni River basin confirmed the dominance of plastic waste at all locations. It was also found that the average density of waste in the Rioni River is 1.77 items per square meter, reaching nearly 4 items per square meter in some sections - significantly exceeding the average recorded in other European rivers (approximately 0.5 items/m²). Particularly high levels of pollution were observed in the areas of Zestafoni, Kutaisi, and Poti, where the amount of waste is seven times higher compared to European rivers. This highlights the scale of the problem and the urgent need for immediate action.

Within the framework of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) project "Transitioning from single-use plastics to environmentally and financially viable alternatives in georgia" a feasibility study on alternatives to single-use plastic products was conducted, based on which a report and corresponding recommendations were prepared. According to the assessments, the consumption of single-use plastic products in the country is significantly high. In particular, approximately 613.5

million units of single-use plastic products are consumed annually in Georgia, amounting to about 3.9–5.9 thousand tons.

The study examined the environmental and economic feasibility of alternatives, taking into account life cycle analysis and waste management principles. It was determined that alternatives to single-use plastics must meet both environmental and financial sustainability criteria. The assessments showed that, from an environmental perspective, reusable alternatives are the most preferable. Although the initial cost of reusable products is higher, their long-term use generally reduces overall expenses. In some cases, the cost per use of reusable alternatives is significantly lower than that of single-use plastic items.This supports a sustainable transition toward reducing the consumption of single-use plastics.

Therefore, plastic consumption poses a significant risk to both the environment and human health; reducing its use and introducing appropriate alternatives is essential for achieving sustainable development goals and protecting environmental and public health.

2. In your case, what are the main challenges slowing the progress in combating plastic pollution? List and describe them briefly.

The main challenges slowing progress in combating plastic pollution include the high consumption of cheap and convenient single-use plastics. In addition, Public awareness remains relatively low, and behavioral resistance to change further complicates efforts to reduce plastic use.

3. What measures (legislative, administrative, institutional, or other), if any, exist to address plastics and plastic pollution? Have human rights implications been taken into account in their adoption and implementation? Are there good practices or lessons learned in regulating plastics and plastic pollution that include a human rights-based approach?

The development of legislation to ban plastic products intended for food contact is driven by several important factors, related both to environmental protection and the safeguarding of human health.

Sustainable waste management is a key function of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, implemented in accordance with the waste management hierarchy established by legislation, where waste prevention is a priority. At the same time, the National Waste Management Strategy emphasizes the necessity of measures aimed at reducing plastic use. In terms of diagnosing plastic pollution, several projects have been carried out nationwide.

In particular, a project implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) examined the feasibility study of alternatives to single-use plastic products, revealing that consumption remains significantly high approximately 613.5 million units annually (around 3.9–5.9 thousand tons).

Additionally, a project supported by the World Bank identified plastic pollution hotspots in the Rioni River basin and its tributaries and assessed waste both quantitatively and qualitatively. The study found that about 88% of the river's waste consists of plastic, the majority of which comes from single-use products, creating significant environmental and economic risks.

Plastic has a significant impact on the environment and natural ecosystems. It's decomposition process takes hundreds of years, leading to accumulation in soil, water bodies, and seas, as well as clogging sanitation systems. The buildup of plastic waste damages marine and coastal ecosystems and poses a threat to aquatic and terrestrial animals, which often ingest or become entangled in plastic debris. As a result, the consumption of single-use plastics contributes to the degradation of ecological systems and hinders the country's sustainable development.

Reducing plastic consumption and introducing environmentally safe alternatives are essential to ensure environmental protection and human health. Preventive measures help reduce water pollution and protect ecosystems. In this regard, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia actively implements measures that include reducing the consumption of plastic products, introducing environmentally friendly alternatives, improving the waste management system, raising public awareness, and strengthening environmental regulations. These efforts contribute to environmental protection and to reducing the negative impacts of plastics on human health.

The Government of Georgia adopted Resolution No. 503 of November 13, 2025, amending Resolution No. 304 of June 8, 2022, on the approval of the technical regulation "On plastic materials and articles intended to come into contact with food." According to this amendment, from January 1, 2026, it is prohibited to produce (except for export), import, and/or place on the market plastic forks, knives, spoons, stirrers, plates, straws, beverage mixers, as well as food containers/cups made of expanded polystyrene (EPS) and their lids. Furthermore, from July 1, 2026, public catering establishments are prohibited from supplying ready food to consumers using single-use plastic food containers and cups.

Additionally, the Government of Georgia adopted Decree No. 2241 of December 26, 2025, "On certain measures related to the public procurement of specific plastic products." According to this decree, from April 1, 2026, the procurement of plastic cups, plastic containers, and beverages in plastic bottles up to 3 liters is prohibited for institutions financed by budgetary funds *(Except for procurement for the needs of the Defense Forces and military personnel).*

Moreover, Resolution No. 106 of March 12, 2026, "On the prohibition of the production, import, and placement on the market of certain plastic products intended to come into contact with food," provides for the prohibition of the production (except for export purposes), import, and placement on the market of beverages in plastic bottles. According to this resolution, from July 1, 2026, public catering establishments are prohibited from supplying beverages specified by the resolution to consumers in plastic bottles *(Does not apply to the production and supply of drinking water intended for the needs of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia for training operations, public safety and law enforcement, as well as preventive and response activities; nor to the production and supply of drinking water intended for the needs of the Defense Forces of Georgia and military personnel for military exercises/training and military operations.).* Furthermore, from February 1, 2031, the production (except for export purposes), import, and placement on the market of such beverages in plastic bottles, as defined by the resolution, shall be prohibited *(Does not apply to drinking water with a volume of 3 liters or more, and to other beverages with a volume of 20 liters or more).*

Therefore, the implemented measures aimed at restricting certain plastic products significantly contribute to reducing the volume of plastic waste, promoting the use of reusable alternative materials, and encouraging the involvement of local producers in the development of a green economy. Ultimately, these efforts support the prevention of environmental pollution and improve the protection of public health.

4. What gaps or challenges in existing national, regional and international policies and legal frameworks have you observed? What recommendations do you have in order to address the gaps? Please, list them according to priority.

Effective management of plastic waste requires aligning legal frameworks with international standards. In this context, The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) was established to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. The outcome of the negotiations needs to be a broad instrument - with obligations, measures and voluntary approaches, including a financial mechanism with stable and predictable financial resources for implementation - integrated across sectors and value chains, and one that considers the entire lifecycle of plastic. Further, this legally binding instrument needs to include marine, land and water plastic pollution, promote sustainable production and consumption of plastics through, among other things, product design and environmentally sound waste management, including through resource efficiency and circular economy approaches and thus rely on several SDGs. Georgia is actively engaged in this process, creating an opportunity to further align national policies with international obligations and strengthen the country's role in combating plastic pollution.