



END THE AGE OF PLASTIC

GLOBAL PLASTICS TREATY MEDIA BRIEFER FOR INC2

THE GLOBAL PLASTICS TREATY MUST STOP RUNAWAY PLASTIC PRODUCTION AND USE AND ULTIMATELY END THE AGE OF PLASTIC.

The global Greenpeace network, together with our allies at the Break Free from Plastic Movement, is working to secure a strong, legally binding **Global Plastics Treaty** at the United Nations. The mandate, "[End plastic pollution: Towards an international legally binding instrument](#)," sets out a goal for the treaty to be negotiated before the end of 2024 – the most significant global opportunity for people and the planet to finally break free from plastic.



The upcoming Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee meeting on May 29 to June 2, 2023 in Paris, France will be the second of five negotiating meetings happening over the next two years.

Quote from Graham Forbes, Global Plastics Campaign Lead for Greenpeace USA:

“A treaty that fails to deliver major reductions in plastic production and use will not solve the runaway plastic catastrophe that is already harming our health, our communities, biodiversity, and our climate. The Global Plastics Treaty is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to solve the plastics crisis. For the sake of our collective future, we cannot waste this moment.”

A strong, effective, and ambitious Global Plastics Treaty must:

1. End plastic pollution - from production to disposal - to protect the environment and human health

Plastic pollution floods our planet, destroys biodiversity, and worsens the climate crisis across the entire life of plastic - from extraction, production, transportation, incineration and dumping. This deadly cycle brought by runaway plastic production and use needs to stop for good.

2. Cap and phase down plastic production

Plastic production keeps us dependent on fossil fuels, [drives climate change](#) and biodiversity loss, and harms communities and workers living near production sites and landfills. If the industry has its way, plastic production could [double within the next 10-15* years, and triple by 2050](#). The treaty must have an immediate cap on plastic production set to a historic baseline, followed by a phasedown in the production and use of plastic and deliver a just transition away from all virgin production capacity.

3. Ensure a just and inclusive transition to a low-carbon, zero-waste, reuse-based economy

The treaty must drive a just transition to sustainable livelihoods across the plastics supply chain, empower workers, prioritizing waste pickers and other affected communities. It must support reuse and refill business models; prioritize the interests of Indigenous Peoples and advance traditional knowledge.

4. Be firmly rooted in a human rights-based approach that reduces inequality, prioritizes human health, and centers justice in its creation and implementation

From production to disposal, plastic pollution negatively impacts our health and human rights. It accelerates social injustice and environmental degradation, and aggravates inequalities brought about by the climate crisis. The negotiations must ensure fair and equitable representation throughout the negotiation and implementation process from Indigenous Peoples and communities disproportionately affected by the plastic pollution crisis. The treaty must have a strong foundation in justice and human rights in order to mitigate further harm.

What happened during INC1?

The first Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee meeting held in Uruguay in November 2022 was mostly procedural in nature. However, presented below are a few noteworthy developments.

- There was a consensus from a number of countries, as well as highly influential companies and civil society, about the **need for a legally binding treaty that sets global obligations on countries**.
- Much of the language at INC1 reflected a narrative shift around plastic pollution with many government delegations referencing human health risks, plastic's impact across its lifecycle, polluter accountability and the role of the informal waste sector.
- On the other hand, **major oil-producing countries**, at the behest of the fossil fuel and petrochemical industries, used procedures and processes to **slow negotiations** and to set the treaty up for failure- for example, Saudi Arabia challenged the rules on voting rights for the European Union (the rules on voting have been bracketed to be discussed at INC2).

- The fossil fuel and petrochemical industry was out in force and lobbied via front groups (e.g. the Alliance to End Plastic Waste). Their interest is clear – a treaty that restricts production or even the use of plastic threatens their bottom line and must be stopped.
- Many countries, including the [High Ambition Coalition \(HAC\)](#), recognized that **national and regional approaches** together with several voluntary international initiatives, while important, have been **insufficient** to address the global plastic pollution crisis.
- The European Union, Norway, New Zealand, Peru, Rwanda and others have publicly called for plastic **production to be reduced**, and over 50 countries who have signed onto the [High Ambition Coalition](#) have publicly stated that **plastic production must be restrained** in order to stop the plastic pollution crisis.
- There was an **emphasis on a just transition** for workers, especially waste pickers and other informal waste sector workers, and waste pickers were a powerful voice both on the floor and around the meeting.
- Concerns were raised about **conflicts of interest** regarding the plastics industry participating in the global plastic treaty process.
- As with other international agreements, the question of how the **measures in the treaty are delivered financially** will be a major challenge- there are a number of funding models on the table after INC1, and this is a major priority for a number of countries and regional groups.

What topics are we expecting to be discussed at INC2 in Paris?

INC2 is still expected to be a procedural meeting that covers:

- getting to agenda items that were not accomplished at INC1 like electing the rest of the [Bureau](#), organization of work (dates and venues of subsequent INCs, creating provisional agenda for INC3);
- substantive issues e.g: do we have a specific or framework convention, how will we finance the measures in the treaty, what kind of control measures should be considered, etc.; and,
- whether the voting system is based on majority versus consensus voting. The latter risks creating a ‘race-to-the-bottom’ where the countries with the lowest ambition are able to negotiate a weaker treaty.

How are countries showing up for the treaty?

As mentioned above, some key themes are emerging in terms of which countries have a particular interest in an ambitious or weak treaty. We can broadly break this down into

- **Higher ambition countries**, who support measures to limit plastic production and/or use of certain problematic plastics, the inclusion of human-rights approach, and reducing/ending inclusion of toxic chemicals in plastics e.g. the High Ambition Coalition which includes the European Union, United Kingdom, Canada, Rwanda, and Peru.

- **Lower ambition countries**, who tend to focus only on the marine litter aspect of plastic pollution - ignoring the impacts of plastic production, and are pushing for the treaty to be focused more on National Action Plans rather than globally binding agreements e.g. US, Japan
- **Countries** who may **block progress**, which are petrochemical States/Oil producing states who are focused to maintain the status quo while pushing for false solutions such as chemical recycling, e.g. Saudi Arabia
- There are also a number of countries that are making their voice heard due to being disproportionately affected by plastic pollution e.g. Small Islands and Developing Nations

Why do we need a Global Plastics Treaty?

The plastics crisis has reached an unprecedented scale and knows no territorial boundaries. Plastic supply chains are global and pollution crosses international borders via waste trade and the ocean commons. While Big Oil and big brands make a profit, Indigenous Peoples, frontline communities, and the Global South bear the brunt of social injustice and the climate and plastic crisis. Currently, there is no comprehensive international law addressing plastics. A global crisis demands a globally coordinated solution, and that is potentially the Global Plastics Treaty.

Why do we need to cut plastic production and use?

- Because over 99% of plastic is made from fossil fuels, and with production only increasing, it is a [significant driver of climate change](#). Predicted expansion of plastic production, numbering into the hundreds of billions of dollars in new infrastructure investment, means that by 2060 annual greenhouse gas emissions from the plastics lifecycle are projected to more than double, to 4.3 Gt CO₂e.
- The global Greenpeace network is calling for the treaty to set an immediate cap on plastic production to a historical baseline, followed by significant reductions in production year-on-year. The treaty should eventually aim to phase out virgin production entirely, as a [number of scientists](#) have called for.
- In addition to massively cutting plastic production, we also need to ban all single-use applications¹ and accelerate a just transition to reuse and refill systems as recycled plastic is toxic and cannot exist in a truly circular economy.

ENDS

Spokespeople are available in English, French, and Mandarin.

Contact: Angelica Carballo Pago, Global Plastics Media Lead, Greenpeace USA

angelica.pago@greenpeace.org, +63 917 112 4492

¹ Excluding medical applications and equipment.