



END THE AGE OF PLASTIC

GLOBAL PLASTICS TREATY INC3 MEDIA BRIEFER

THE GLOBAL PLASTICS TREATY MUST CUT TOTAL PLASTIC PRODUCTION BY AT LEAST 75% BY 2040.

Greenpeace, 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 November 13 to 19, 2023 in Nairobi, Kenya will be the third of five negotiating meetings happening over the next two years.

Quote from **Graham Forbes, Greenpeace Head of Delegation to to the Global Plastics Treaty negotiations** and Global Plastics Campaign Lead for Greenpeace USA:

“The Global Plastics Treaty must cut total plastic production by at least 75% by 2040 to ensure that we are staying below 1.5° C for our climate and to protect our health, our rights and our communities. This 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, packaging, distribution, incineration and dumping. This deadly cycle brought by runaway plastic production and use needs to stop for good.

2. Set a legally-binding target to reduce plastic production by at least 75% by 2040 to stay below 1.5° C

The best available modeling^{1 2} suggests that to be aligned with a 1.5° C compatible pathway you need to achieve a decline in plastic production of between 46% and 70% by 2050 against 2019 levels. However, we believe that these models are conservative. These models only focus on plastic's climate impacts - but these are often underrepresented due to emissions across the plastic life-cycle [not being counted fully](#). They don't include plastic's effects on biodiversity and human health, and that is why we have to achieve a more ambitious reduction ('at least 75%') by a sooner date (2040).

Plastic production keeps us dependent on fossil fuels and not only [drives climate change](#), but also 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 cut plastic production by at least 75% by 2040 based on a 2019 baseline followed by a phasedown in the production and use of plastic and deliver a just transition away from all virgin production capacity.

3. End single-use plastics, starting with the worst offending items

All plastics are problematic when considered from a whole life cycle approach – the environmental, health and social impacts from extraction (e.g fossil sources), plastic production, use, waste management and disposal make a strong case that plastic must be reduced as far as possible, particularly where safer, more sustainable, and circular substitutes exist. Due to the large-scale use of plastic in today's society, it is imperative that we eliminate problematic plastic products first.

Highly problematic plastic products and materials include:

- Products containing intentional microplastics
- Plastic products and materials whose design, use or waste management has a high propensity to produce nano- or microplastics
- Single-use packaging, including sachets, polystyrene, plastic bags, food containers etc.
- Other single-use or short-lived plastic products including containers, glitter/confetti, balloons, utensils, cigarette filters/holders, tea bags, disposable products, e-cigarettes etc.

¹ Research by [Pacific Environment](#) suggests to be aligned with 1.5 you need to achieve a reduction in production of at least 75% against BAU levels.

² [Eunomia](#) suggests you need a 75% reduction in per capita plastic consumption by 2050.

- Plastic products and associated materials which have a high propensity to physically harm or kill wildlife or otherwise transgress planetary boundaries.
- Plastic products and associated materials which are difficult to collect, sort, or safely and economically recycle with the existing infrastructure.

It is important that the plastic treaty considers both plastic materials as well as plastic products, to allow broader and more effective elimination of specific plastic materials that are particularly prone to cause pollution or harm to human health. The treaty should regulate plastic products and materials by group wherever possible to avoid regrettable substitution and production.

4. 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.

5. 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 INC2?

The second Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee meeting held in Paris, France in May 2023 was mostly procedural but discussed important substance towards the end and member states gave the Chair the mandate to produce a Zero Draft. Presented below are a few noteworthy developments.

- **Zero Draft:** During INC2, countries decided to ask the INC chair Gustavo Meza-Cuadra to produce a Zero Draft ahead of INC3. This is the first draft text of the treaty created by the Chair, and supported by the Secretariat.

What is the Zero Draft? The [Zero Draft](#) is a document that outlines options for the treaty text. It was created by the Chair with the support of the Secretariat and was published in September 2023. From this document, delegates will then negotiate what the treaty will include starting from INC3 and in future INCs that will happen.

- **We discussed substance for the first time:** The first discussions on [core obligations](#) of the treaty (what measures the treaty actually delivers; bans, limits, targets etc.) and [means of implementation](#) (broadly, how do we pay for and deliver the measures in the treaty) took place during the final two and a half days of the INC. These discussions informed the creation of a zero-draft text.
- **There is a caucus of support for plastic reduction:** A number of member states called for global targets on reducing plastic production e.g. UK, Norway, Switzerland, EU, African group, Ecuador, New Zealand etc. This is not the general consensus yet, but *would have been unthinkable 5 years ago*.
- **Delayed negotiations:** Countries used procedural questions to stall the negotiations. Almost two full days were spent in the large Plenary Session, as a group of countries including Saudi Arabia, Russia, China, India and others challenged the agreed upon Draft Rules of Procedure. This delayed negotiating substantive issues.
- **Fossil Fuel Interests:** Petrochemical and fossil fuel producing countries led the push for low ambition. The fossil fuel industry flooded the negotiations with lobbyists to advance industry interests. This included avoiding any limit on production, a call for limiting treaty obligations to nationally determined actions, focusing on waste management, and opposing banning or phasing-out certain plastic products.
- **Voluntary or ‘bottom up’ measures:** Many countries are pushing hard for the treaty not to have any globally binding measures but to be delivered through ‘voluntary’ or ‘nationally determined’ measures instead. This is one of the fights we will be having over the next few INCs and is completely intertwined with the geopolitical/industrial dynamics below.
- **Limited Participation:** A small venue limited the number of observers who were able to participate in the negotiations in-person. Lengthy procedural discussions in the Plenary sessions also limited the amount of time given to observers for remarks.
- **Too much focus on ‘downstream’:** Some of the most powerful member states in the negotiations and their allies (India, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, UAE, USA) are pushing for the treaty to focus solely on recycling or ‘waste management’ and defining ‘plastic pollution’ as only that which leaks into the marine environment. This is particularly embarrassing for the USA, who called for the words plastic pollution to be *removed* from the treaty objective, a position Saudi Arabia agreed with. Recycling will never be able to fix the pollution caused by

plastic across its lifecycle, and this conversation is a tactic to force the treaty to avoid dealing with the real problem - massive overproduction and use of plastic.

What topics are expected to be discussed at INC3 in Nairobi, Kenya?

- The [provisional agenda](#) and [scenario note](#) for INC3 gives us an idea on how the session will flow and what topics are likely to be covered.
- In terms of procedural matters, it can be expected that there will be:
 - A discussion on the rules of procedure, which have previously significantly delayed the negotiations.
 - A discussion of the synthesis report of submissions on scope and principles of the treaty
 - Likely a discussion of the report from INC2
- In terms of substance, it can be expected that the contact groups will be focusing on three areas:
 - Parts 1 & 2 of the Zero Draft which is the preamble, objectives and control measures (the latter being the substance of what the treaty actually 'does' - production limits, bans on products, polymers and chemicals etc.)
 - Parts 3 & 4 of the Zero Draft which is focused on means of implementation i.e. finance, national plans, governance, reporting, monitoring etc. This refers to how the control measures agreed through the treaty are paid for, as well as how to ensure countries meet the requirements that are agreed.
 - We can expect a group focused on scope and principles of the treaty as well as next steps for intersessional work, but this is yet to be confirmed.

What is Greenpeace hoping to achieve in this round of the negotiations?

Greenpeace is hopeful that we can achieve the following objectives during the negotiation session:

- Ensure a first reading of the Zero Draft
- Member States agree a mandate for the preparation of a first draft
- Member States agree a clear programme for intersessional work, including establishing a working group focused on plastic production

Greenpeace is also keeping a watch on the following political and policy dynamics:

- **Delay tactics:** It will be interesting to observe whether the broad '[BRICS plus](#)' coalition - especially Saudi Arabia, India and Brazil- will continue to share positions and delay tactics as we observed at INC2. On the other hand, it will be useful to see the dynamics within the **High Ambition Coalition** led by Norway and Rwanda - there are now countries in the HAC who have less ambition on control measures such as Japan and South Korea. This could mean a less ambitious treaty but one that's more

legally-binding, and could be key to unlocking support from key BRIC countries. It will also be interesting if any other countries join the coalition in the run-up to or at the next INC

- **Plastic production:** How negotiators are discussing the need to address plastic production through a global target is critical- a treaty that fails to address plastic production at source will not be ‘turning off the tap’
- **Binding vs. non-binding:** There are options in the Zero Draft which would be extremely weak, which a number of member states including the USA and India have been pushing strongly to ensure the control measures are as broad or non-legally binding as possible. In some case this is to do with the strength of language (‘should’ vs ‘shall’), but there are also key points where obligations to meet a target could be decided on a ‘national basis’ or be ‘nationally determined’- as we have learnt from the Paris agreement, ‘nationally determined contributions’ can be extremely weak.
- **Finance:** a key political fight, as with other international agreements, is how control measures in the treaty will be paid for. Greenpeace, as well as many other groups, are pushing for a new multilateral fund to ensure member states can access stable funding, as opposed to relying solely on funding from sources like the Global Environment Fund

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, fenceline 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.
- Greenpeace is calling for the treaty to **set a legally-binding target to reduce plastic production by at least 75% by 2040 to stay below 1.5° C**, 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 non-essential single-use applications³ 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, Swahili, French, Filipino and Japanese.

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³ Excluding medical applications and equipment.