



## Public Statement

# **Latin America is not a garbage dump. We reject the cross border trade of plastic waste in Global South territories.**

Sign [here](#) to support this statement

According to recent research by GAIA member organizations in Mexico, Ecuador, Argentina, and Chile, plastic waste exports from the United States to some Latin American countries increased by more than 100% in 2020, at the height of the pandemic.

For this reason, the organizations that make up the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA) in Latin America and the Caribbean declare their rejection and state of alert before this threat. This threat makes our region an emergent destination for global plastic waste after China stopped this type of import in 2018 to protect its territory from contamination.

Globally, there is growing concern about the shipment of plastic waste from significant powerhouses such as the United States, the largest exporter of plastic waste, to nations with weak legislation and controls. Because of this situation, we view with concern that:

According to the U.S. international free trade database, USA Trade Online, between January and August 2020, 44,173 tons of plastic waste arrived from the United States to 15 Latin American countries. That meant the shipment of approximately 35 containers per day of plastic waste to the region. Despite the regulations and the initial governmental actions, the state in which thousands of tons of plastic waste enter through ports and borders is still unknown in the analyzed countries. Its primary origin is the United States, which is not a signatory to the Basel Convention.

The plastic waste trade is currently carried out through broad and ambiguous tariff headings, subheadings, and fractions, which do not track these materials until their final use. From the experiences of Asian countries, there is ample evidence that these wastes arrive contaminated or are difficult to recycle, which has an environmental impact on the receiving countries.

GAIA is not the only organization that has been concerned about the increase in plastic waste flows to the region. A 2020 Interpol report warned that the recycling sector is growing in Latin America. Chinese investors are showing interest in our continent to set up factories due to access to cheap labor and proximity to the United States.

Mexico, El Salvador, and Ecuador are the leading importers of plastic waste in the region. Between January and August 2020 alone, 32,650 tons arrived in Mexico, 4,054 tons in El Salvador, and 3,665 tons in Ecuador, according to data compiled by The Last Beach Cleanup.

We warn that we are facing the imminent contamination of nature and the violation of the right of communities to live in a safe and healthy environment. Likewise, representatives of different organizations have expressed their support and concern by stating:

"Crossborder plastic waste trade is perhaps one of the most nefarious expressions of the commercialization of common goods and the colonial occupation of territories of the geopolitical south to turn them into sacrifice zones. Latin America and the Caribbean are not the backyards of the United States. We are sovereign territories, and we demand the respect of the rights of Nature and our peoples" - **Fernanda Soliz, Health Area Director at Simón Bolívar University, Ecuador.**

"It is irresponsible and immoral that the United States fails to prevent companies from exporting plastic waste to Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as throughout the Global South. Rather than implementing proper waste reduction measures domestically, the U.S. is perpetrating waste colonialism by dumping this toxic pollution on other countries. We are in solidarity with our Latin American partners and allies who demand their national governments stop accepting waste imports. We will hold the U.S. government accountable for real and equitable solutions to the plastic pollution crisis." - **Melissa Aguayo, Break Free From Plastic - U.S. Coordinator.**

"It is irresponsible and immoral that the United States fails to prevent companies from exporting plastic waste to Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as throughout the Global South. Rather than implementing proper waste reduction measures domestically, the U.S. is perpetrating waste colonialism by dumping this toxic pollution on other countries. We are in solidarity with our Latin American partners and allies who demand their national governments stop accepting waste imports. We will hold the U.S. government accountable for real and equitable solutions to the plastic pollution crisis." - **Melissa Aguayo, Break Free From Plastic - U.S. Coordinator.**

We, the signatory organizations, urgently demand that:

- Latin American and Caribbean countries adapt their legislation to implement the Basel Convention (all signatories except Haiti) and its Plastics Amendment.
- Authorities should make information on imports of plastic waste transparent and strengthen their controls.
- Customs registries should be in place to know precisely the type and state of plastic waste entering Latin American ports.
- The protection of our territory and its communities should be a priority in the face of bilateral or multilateral agreements such as free trade agreements which could facilitate the entry of plastic waste.

We are facing a waste crisis which proves that to achieve success in the efforts towards truly sustainable waste management, we need to prioritize reduction policies. Secondly, to guarantee the reuse and recyclability of packaging, we must ensure that its recycling is carried out in places close to where it is generated. We categorically reject the high recycling figures shown by rich countries, at the cost of turning our continent into a garbage dump.

## **Signatory organizations:**

Acción Ecológica, Ecuador

Acción Ecológica y Academia Mexicana de Derecho Ambiental

Agrupación Aitué de Huillinco, Chile

Alianza Basura Cero Chile

Arnika, Czech Republic.

Asociación Ecológica Santo Tomás, Mexico.

Ban SUP, USA.

C-CUBED, Nigeria

CAAN Glens Falls, USA.

Cafetería Cultura, USA.

Climate Reality Project Philippines, Philippines.

Colectivo VientoSur, Chile.

Community Research, USA.

CREPD, Cameroon.

CT Coalition for EJ, USA.

Digital Data Standards LLC, USA.

Comunidades de East Yard por la Justicia Ambiental, USA.

Ecoton, USA.

Ecoviable, Colombia.

Evestico Ltd, United Kingdom.

FoCo Trash Mob, USA.

Fronteras Comunes, Mexico.

Fundación Basura, Chile,

Fundación El Árbol, Chile.

Fundación Lengua, Chile.

Galena Green Team, USA.

Gili Eco Trust, Indonesia.

Greenpeace Finland.

Apoyo a la Justicia en Salud y Medio Ambiente (HEJSupport), internacional.

Alianza para la Prevención de Residuos de Humusz, Hungría.

ICA Agro SpA, Chile.

INTA, Argentina.  
JA! Justica Ambiental, Mozambique.  
Just Goods, USA.  
Fundación Ambiental KY, USA.  
Futuros locales, USA.  
Love Plant Nourish de Ike & Eli's Organic Farm, LLC, USA.  
Mingas por el mar, Ecuador.  
Observatorio de Aves del Río Missouri, USA.  
Mesa de Justicia Ambiental MN BIPOC, USA.  
Nipe Fagio, Tanzania.  
Club Ambiental PCC, Trinidad and Tobago.  
Plastic Free Society, France.  
Plastic Oceans International  
Coalición contra la contaminación plástica, USA.  
Plataforma Antiincineración de Montcada, Spain.  
Public Environmental Centre for Sustainable Development , Bulgaria.  
Purge Plastic, United Kingdom.  
Red de Acción por los Derechos Ambientales RADA, Chile.  
SAISOCA, Venezuela.  
Sea Hugger, USA.  
Six Senses Hotels Resorts Spas, Thailand.  
StopPlastics, Canada.  
Iniciativa de desarrollo ambiental sostenible, Nigeria.  
Sustainable Mill Valley, USA.  
Taller de Comunicación Ambiental (Rosario), Argentina.  
Taller Ecologista, Argentina.  
TECHshare - Technik, Bildung, Solidarität, Switzerland.  
The Last Beach Cleanup, USA.  
The Last Plastic Straw, USA.  
The Ocean Project, USA.  
UANL, Mexico.  
UDD, Chile.  
Universidad Santo Tomás, Colombia.

UUFHCT, USA.

VMCH, Australia.

WasteLess, India.

Whole Vashon Project, USA.

Wonderfil, USA.

Zero Waste Association of South Africa

Laboratorio Residuo Cero Portugal.