

Global plastics treaty: Recommendations for INC1

Overview

Plastic pollution knows no borders—it is in the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe, our oceans' deepest trenches and the highest mountain peaks. Plastic production is doubling every 15–20 years and with it, pollution across every stage of the plastics lifecycle, from feedstock sourcing to final disposal and emissions to the environment. With a mandate from the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), an intergovernmental negotiating committee (INC) is now poised to negotiate a global plastics treaty at its first meeting (INC1) in Punta del Este, Uruguay.

A successful INC1 will:

- 1. Deliver a negotiations roadmap that prioritizes reducing plastic polymer production and a just transition.** Time-allocation is decisive, and only a negotiations schedule that makes ample time for reduction and just transition will deliver a treaty that is effective on those fronts (see proposed calendar below).
- 2. Decide on a Specific Convention that blends binding global obligations including reduction targets with National Action Plans** that build the infrastructure and systems needed to reduce plastic production, end plastic pollution, and deliver a just transition for affected informal and formal workers, including reuse, and infrastructure to safely mechanically recycle plastic waste in the countries where it is generated.
- 3. Adopt working definitions for concepts that shape treaty scope**, such as “plastics”, “plastic pollution” and “lifecycle”, to ensure clarity in negotiations and sufficient scope to effectively tackle pollution across the lifecycle of plastics, until such definitions are formally adopted in future treaty text or annexes.
- 4. Establish a framework to ban plastic polymers, additives, products and waste-management processes that harm human or environmental health** including those that worsen toxic pollution or circulate toxics in the economy, threaten water security, or deepen environmental injustice (e.g., “waste-to-energy” incineration, pyrolysis and gasification, plastic waste exports).
- 5. Ensure meaningful and direct participation for civil society**, not mediated by the Major Groups system that is not fit for purpose for treaty negotiations and was considered and rejected by the Open-Ended Working Group meeting. Civil society needs include financial and interpretation support for participation in negotiations, as well as access to contact groups. Special attention must be given to waste-pickers, fenceline and frontline communities, Indigenous and Traditional communities, and women.

An effective negotiations roadmap could have the following structure:

INC1	INC2	INC3	INC4	INC5
Cluster 1: Scope and Objectives				
Cluster 2: Institutional Framework (including financial, monitoring and scientific mechanisms and enforcement)				
	Cluster 3: Managing Production and Uses: Quantities, Polymers, Additives, Applications, Impacts			
		Cluster 4: Design for Safe Reuse and Recycling		
			Cluster 5: Environmentally-Sound Waste Management	
			Cluster 6: National Action Plans and just transition	


While negotiation time must focus on treaty measures that will reduce plastic polymer production, **clear and sufficiently-broad definitions** are needed to support effective negotiations and avoid loopholes. In particular, the treaty scope must cover **both intentional and unintentional plastic additives, composite materials** that contain plastics, plastics made from **semi-synthetic polymers** (e.g., vulcanized natural rubber, cellophane, viscose) and hybrid inorganic-organic polymers (e.g. **silicones**), **in all their states of matter and water solubility**.

Other elements needed for an effective global plastics treaty to be negotiated at future INCs include a framework for robust and harmonized reporting, monitoring and transparency, a dedicated scientific body free from conflicts of interest, a fund for developing country compliance and remediation of legacy plastic pollution, and an enforcement mechanism.

For more information, see:



[GAIA's proposed plastic products, materials and polymer definitions](#)



[See GAIA's policy briefing series and recent submissions related to the global plastics treaty](#)

GAIA is a network of grassroots groups as well as national and regional alliances representing more than 1000 organizations from 92 countries. We envision a just, zero waste world built on respect for ecological limits and community rights, where people are free from the burden of toxic pollution, and resources are sustainably conserved, not burned or dumped. We work to catalyze a global shift towards environmental justice by strengthening grassroots social movements that advance solutions to waste and pollution.

