Africa Community Sensitisation Guidebook:

101 to Organising for the Global Plastics Treaty

#Break Free From Plastic
Acknowledgements

The report has been made possible in part through funding from the Plastic Solutions Fund. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Plastic Solutions Fund. This report or its parts may be reproduced for non-commercial purposes provided the source is fully acknowledged. Reproduction for sale or commercial purposes is prohibited without the written permission of the copyright holder.

Available online at: www.no-burn.org/africa-community-sensitisation-plastics-treaty-toolkit

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500 Esther Roberts Road, Glenwood, Durban, 4001, South Africa

www.no-burn.org

Facebook:@ZeroWasteAfrica | Instagram: @africaforzerowaste

GAIA: GAIA is a global network of grassroots groups, NGOs, and individuals, in over 90 countries. The organisation envisions 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. GAIA works to catalyse a global shift towards environmental justice by strengthening grassroots social movements that advance solutions to waste and pollution. www.no-burn.org

BFFP: The #breakfreefromplastic (BFFP) Movement is a global movement envisioning a future free from plastic pollution. Since its launch in 2016, more than 11,000 organisations and individual supporters from across the world have joined the movement to demand massive reductions in single-use plastics and to push for lasting solutions to the plastic pollution crisis. www.breakfreefromplastic.org

Cover image courtesy of James Wakibia.
The Global Plastic Treaty Africa Community Sensitisation Guidebook is a comprehensive resource designed to empower community-driven initiatives by enhancing the understanding of the Global Plastic Treaty and facilitating effective advocacy campaigns.

Within this guidebook, you’ll find a wealth of downloadable resources tailored for printing, along with versatile templates for presentations, social media engagement, and email communications. Whether you’re organising workshops, spreading awareness online, or engaging with local stakeholders, school programmes or governments, this guidebook will equip you with the tools and materials needed to amplify your impact and drive meaningful change.
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Plastic Production

The 20th century was filled with numerous inventions that greatly influenced the world. However, an invention that made the most dramatic impact was that of plastics which was welcomed as ‘wonder materials’ because of its ‘so-called’ convenience, versatility and durability. The advent of plastics dates back at least 150 years ago which is a relatively short period of time for a material that has managed to colonise our daily lives and become an increasing environmental threat worldwide. And this upward trajectory is far from over.

By 2050, it is estimated that the total volume of plastic ever produced will reach 34,000 million tons (Mt)—over four times what has been produced so far.

Who do you think is to blame for fuelling this continuous loop of high mass production and consumption? Nearly all plastics up to 99% are made from fossil fuels i.e. oil, gas and coal extracted from oil fields and fracking drill pads, belonging to multinational petrochemical giants whose agenda to flood the world, its oceans, rivers, agricultural soils and even our desirability with plastics has been successfully achieved in the name of convenience and progressiveness. As the world looks towards energy transition, renewable power, electric vehicles, and the grid getting greener, oil and gas companies are getting nervous. That’s why the fossil fuel giants are looking towards petrochemicals, and plastics in particular. Currently, 6% of total oil production is used by the plastic sector, and it is estimated that it will represent 20% use by 2050.

The real problem with plastics is once they are produced, they never go away and how so? To produce plastic, the raw materials (oil & gas) are extracted & refined first, and then treated with heat to become ethylene and propylene. These materials are used together to create different polymers which are made of long, repeating chains of molecules. During this production process, many chemicals are added to make plastic very hard to break down or durable, which is why we see plastic persisting in the environment for a long time. In many cases, plastics will take up to a thousand years to degrade. However, when plastics are exposed to elements like sun, wind and water, they can break down to form smaller plastics, which are now known as microplastics, some of which are small enough to enter the food chain of many animals, whether out at sea or on land and now even the bloodstream of human beings.

Another hidden cost of the vicious life cycle of plastics is its contribution to the climate crisis. Harmful greenhouse gasses are emitted at each stage of the plastic lifecycle. If plastic production and use grow as currently planned by 2030, these emissions could reach 1.34 gigatons per year—equivalent to the emissions released by more than 295 new 500-megawatt coal-fired power plants and deplete 10-13 % of the entire remaining carbon budget by 2050.

It has even been said that If the lifecycle of plastics were a country, it would be the fifth largest greenhouse gas emitter on Earth, contributing negatively to the climate crisis.

The impacts and injustices of plastic pollution manifest at each stage of its lifecycle. Upon examining extraction, production, use and disposal of plastic, health and environmental effects occur at every stage of the plastics lifecycle, whether caused by plastic itself or by additives and processing.
Since the 50’s, the global plastic production increased more than 20 times and everything indicates that it will be doubled in 2034, if measures are not taken to regulate the complete life cycle from the conception and design of plastic products.

Of all that plastic that has already been produced, it is estimated that 79% has accumulated in landfills and in the environment, 12% was incinerated and only 9% was recycled.

The rich countries of the Global North have high rates of waste segregation for recycling, but they only recycle plastic that is cost-effective, such as PET. The rest, is exported to low-income countries in the Global South including Southeast Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. Just only a small part of the plastics that arrive into those countries are used for recycling, and the rest ends up being dumped in illegal landfills, buried, burned or co-incinerated in cement plants.
The Plastics Lifecycle

Extraction
Once fossil fuels (oil and gas) is extracted, infrastructure, including pipelines, transports raw materials to refineries or directly to the market can release hundreds of toxins during pumping or piping feedstocks, which can cause a wide range of effects, including:

- Damage to sensory organs such as the skin and eyes; effects on bodily systems, including the respiratory, nervous, and gastrointestinal; and the impairment of organs such as the liver and brain;
- Increased likelihood of cancer, neurological, reproductive, and developmental problems and
- Impairment of the immune system.

Production
To produce plastics, raw feedstocks (oil and gas) must be turned into long, repeating chains of molecules like ethylene and propylene. They are then combined and processed to incorporate chemical additives and are then moulded into plastic products. This process is referred to as production.

During the production phase, emissions are also released that can impair the nervous system and cause reproductive and developmental problems, cancer, leukaemia, and genetic impacts like low birth weight.

Fenceline communities located close to production sites and workers employed in the production facilities are impacted by the daily threat of toxic exposure, potential accidents/ incidents, or death.

Consumption
Using plastic consumer goods exposes people to the toxic impacts of plastics. Microplastics and hazardous chemicals used in plastic products can contaminate the surrounding environment, including air, water, and food, and enter into the bodies of animals and human tissue. The ingestion and/or inhalation of microplastics shedding from products and hazardous additives leaching out of the plastic products can severely affect human health. Hundreds of substances are used in plastic products, including substances of concern such as known or suspected carcinogens, and chemicals impacting development, fertility, and the endocrine system.

Waste
Only a small fraction of plastic waste is economically or technically viable to recycle (representing a mere 10% of all the plastic ever produced). Waste blocks drainage, leading to floods, is unappealing and can trap animals.

Dumping & Burning
Sometimes, waste is collected but not actually recycled and just dumped or burned. In fact, the waste industry in richer countries also often transports plastic waste to poorer countries to be dumped there (i.e. a concept known as waste trade). In this way, the vast majority of our plastic waste enters the environment (via landfill or marine and terrestrial litter), and a smaller percentage is burned (12%). All methods result in the release of toxic metals, organic substances, acid gasses, and other toxic substances into the air, water, and soil. Some of the toxins released by plastics are some of the most toxic substances on earth (dioxins and furans).

The inhalation of contaminated air, direct contact with contaminated soil or water, and ingestion of foods grown in an environment polluted with these substances lead to short and long-term severe health effects, in particular for workers and fence line communities.

In the Environment
When plastic reaches the environment, it fragments into micro or nanoplastics, which contaminate and accumulate in food chains through agricultural soils, terrestrial and aquatic food chains, and the water supply. This environmental plastic can leach toxic additives or concentrate toxins and pathogens already in the environment, making them bioavailable again for direct or indirect human exposure.

The health impacts are similar to those experienced during the ingestion and inhalation of plastics at other stages of the life cycle. Once in the human body, microplastics can lead to chronic inflammation, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, neurodegenerative diseases, cancer, and even stroke.

The Lifecycle of Plastic

1 Extraction
Plastic comes from oil, which is extracted from the seabed and land.

2 Production
Resins are used to produce all kinds of items. Here toxic additives are added to increase color, flexibility and resistance to fire and ultraviolet rays.

3 Consumption
When consuming the products with plastic, we also consume the toxic additives they contain. That puts our health at risk.

4 Discard
Each day, millions of tons of plastics are discarded because the industry has found that it earns more by selling disposable products.

5 Recycling
Despite the enormous effort done by the wastepickers and part of the population, only 9% of the plastic is recycled. In addition, toxic additives in plastic put at risk the health of wastepickers and consumers of recycled products.

6 Final disposal
Plastic remains hundreds of years in the environment breaking into smaller pieces, releasing polluting gases and the toxic additives it contains.

©GAIA- Plastics Crisis: Challenges, Advances and Relationship with Wastepickers. Link: https://www.no-burn.org/resources/booklets-plastic-crisis/
Exposing the Risks of the Plastic Crisis

Toxic Additives in Plastic

Plastic products often contain various additives to enhance their properties, but some of these additives can be harmful to human health and the environment. These toxic additives include plasticizers, flame retardants, and stabilisers, among others. When plastics degrade or are improperly disposed of, these additives can leach into the surrounding environment, contaminating soil, water sources, and ultimately entering the food chain. Exposure to these toxins has been linked to a range of health issues, including hormonal disruptions, developmental problems, and certain cancers.

Exposing Problems From Toxic Chemicals in Plastics by IPEN

Plastics contain invisible health threats from chemicals like #BPA, #PFAS and others are linked to cancer, infertility and other serious conditions. In a video IPEN outlines how plastics expose children and families to harmful chemicals throughout our lives and are inherently incompatible with circular economy approaches.
### The Additives in Plastic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additives in Plastic</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bisphenol A</strong></td>
<td>It is found in beverage bottles, food containers, tickets with thermal printing, etc. It has effects on brain development and behavior, reproductive health, is associated with breast, prostate, ovarian and uterine cancer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phthalates</strong></td>
<td>They are used to increase flexibility and reduce the brightness of products such as PVC, food and drink containers, toys, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perfluorinated Compounds</strong></td>
<td>They are found in food wrappers, paints, waterproof clothing, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alkylphenols</strong></td>
<td>Phthalates and perfluorinated compounds are disruptors of the immune system, liver and thyroid functions. They are related to low birth weight, impaired puberty, increased risk of breast cancer, are associated with cancer of the kidney, testicles, prostate, ovaries and non-Hodkin lymphoma.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brominated Fire Retardants</strong></td>
<td>They are found in PVC and plumavit among other names. Related to male infertility, low sperm accounting, disruption of prostate development, male and female breast cancer when exposed in their jobs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Heavy Metals such as lead and cadmium</strong></td>
<td>They are found in toys, recycled plastics, electronics, etc. They are disruptors of reproductive development in men and women, alter the development of the thyroid and affect the development of the nervous system.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unpacking the Health Impacts of Plastic Chemicals by Trash Hero World

In an interview with Yuyun Ismawati, the co-founder and Senior Advisor of Nexus3, a non-profit organisation working towards a just, toxics-free, and sustainable future, Yuyun shares the need for plastic to be reduced, how the recycling of plastic products with chemicals in its make-up will lead to chemicals being accumulated in the new products, and why it’s important for countries to reduce the use of harmful chemicals that are already known.

Watch the Explainer Video of the Health Impacts of Plastic Chemicals (PT1)

Watch the Explainer Video of the Health Impacts of Plastic Chemicals (PT2)
#Stories of the Most Impacted Communities

#BreakFreeFromPlastic Toxic Tours

A community-led storytelling and mapping experience on the impacts of plastic production and disposal on frontline communities. The Tours elevate local voices and ensure that community fights are amplified.

**South Durban, South Africa:**
The communities of South Durban live in some of the most heavily air polluted areas in Southern Africa. Home to two large petrochemical refineries, local communities suffer from racist zoning strategies that date from the apartheid government. South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA) works to fight for environmental justice for the vulnerable communities in this area. Air quality monitoring is performed by the SDCEA, in order to have independent data on the air pollution in the community. The community suffers from high levels of asthma, severe chest pain, cancer and leukaemia, due to the industries in the area. Take the Toxic Tour.

**Kabale Sub County, Uganda:**
Uganda is one of the sub-saharan countries to recently start oil extraction. To set up the petrochemical industrial park, the government of Uganda acquired 2,957 hectares of land in Kabale. The petrochemical industrial park is to include Uganda's second international airport, The East Africa Crude Oil export pipeline hub, an oil refinery, warehousing facilities and logistics, polymer and fertiliser industries as well as agro-processing plants. Among the 13 villages affected are Kyapaloni, Kigaaga B, Kabale A and Kabale B, all in Kabale Sub County. The resettlement action plan conducted in 2014 affected 7,118 people who had to be compensated for the acquisition of their land. Those that asked for relocation or rejected the offered compensation were left to languish in ghost villages, and suffered food shortages with little or no access to clean water, schools and health care services. Many other households who opted for cash compensation realised that it was insufficient to purchase land equivalent to what they had given up for the petrochemical industrial park. Take the Toxic Tour.

**Turkana County, Kenya:**
The Turkana are found in Northern Kenya, and are a nomadic people. They are largely pastoralists and their traditional way of life is crucial to the sustainability of their livelihoods. The Turkana are now having to navigate the murky relations that characterise oil extraction as observed in other jurisdictions in Africa. The footage highlights the negative environmental, social and economic impacts that the petrochemical sector has brought to the community and how it is beginning to change their way of life. Take the Toxic Tour.
Leader of Kenyan waste pickers: ‘We are the backbone of recycling’
| Plastics | The Guardian.

Read this profile article on John Chweya and his journey as a waste picker in Kenya. Waste pickers are the cornerstone of recycling in the global south and yet they face unforgiving working conditions. John’s story highlights waste pickers as experts and shares the demands for recognition and respect.
Delving into the Global Plastic Treaty: Objectives and Impacts

How did the Global Plastics Treaty come about?

On the 2nd March 2022, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) announced the adoption of the world’s first global plastics treaty to END PLASTIC POLLUTION. This moment in history offers the world a global solution to the global problem of plastic pollution and recognizes the right we all have to a healthy, safe & clean environment. It gives us the opportunity to reconstruct the curve of plastic overproduction & consumption and remediate environmental injustices that the plastics life cycle has borne to fenceline communities, waste pickers & indigenous communities and turn the tide on false solutions (i.e. due to the urgency to solve the plastics crisis, the industry promotes false solutions which aim to do more business with pollution using discarded plastics as raw material to feed other industrial processes. In general, these systems generate more pollution and do not address the causes of the problem, such as: poor design and overproduction) & greenwashing (i.e. when an organisation/company spends more time & money on marketing itself as environmentally friendly than actually minimising its environmental impact). The Global Plastics Treaty is the result of strong pressure that has been building globally for action on plastics for several years. At the international level, this has been part of ongoing discussions at the United Nations Environment Assembly (which is the governance body responsible for setting the global environmental agenda, providing overarching policy guidance, and defining policy responses to address emerging environmental challenges), that brings together groups of countries every 2 years or so and at the last meeting (UNEA 5.2) the world got a unanimous resolution which we refer to as a mandate (resolution 5/14). We transitioned from restricting the plastic pollution crisis as a marine litter only problem to one that needs to be addressed across its full life cycle. As part of the 5.14 UNEA Resolution, UNEP requested the executive director to convene an intergovernmental negotiating committee (or INC) to begin its work during the second half of 2022, with the ambition of completing that work by the end of 2024. The plastics treaty is an acknowledgement by governments that plastic pollution knows no borders and therefore, global coordinated action is needed - and given the failure of several voluntary initiatives, and the severity of the plastic pollution crisis, the time was ripe for a treaty.
The Global Plastics Treaty has been 5 UNEAs in the making:

Successive efforts since the third meeting of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA3) in 2017 was the turning point that culminated into UNEA resolution 5/14 in 2022.

**UNEA 5 (2022) Resolution 5/14: End plastic pollution: towards an international legally binding instrument**

- To end plastic pollution across the full life cycle of plastics that includes all plastics and associated pollution with no exceptions.

**UNEA 4 (2019) Resolution 4/6: Marine plastic litter and microplastics**

- Strengthening international coordination and sharing knowledge
- Extended mandate of expert group on marine litter and microplastics

**UNEA 3 (2017) Resolution 3/7: Marine plastic debris and microplastics**

- Recognized the inefficient global governance, established expert group

**UNEA 2 (2016) Resolution 2/11: Marine plastic debris and microplastics**

- Identifies knowledge gaps, calls for global response considering a product life cycle approach

**UNEA 1 (2014) Resolution 1/6: Marine plastic debris and microplastics**

- Agreeing on the global emerging threat of plastics
What is the UN Negotiating System Like?

Who are the Negotiators, and Who Are the Observers?

- The UN Negotiating System represents negotiation that takes place primarily between governments.
- CSOs (Civil Society Organisations) are observers, and can only make suggestions by permission and not by right, and cannot directly propose or oppose text.
- There are different rules that apply to CSOs presence and interventions.
- Many countries support the presence of CSOs, but many also want CSOs out of the negotiating room.
- The role of CSOs is to lobby for positions that they want to see enacted in the final treaty and the best way for them to do that is to be useful (i.e. provide technical, local knowledge, good arguments and scientifically sound evidence to bolster their arguments and understanding of plastic and waste systems) to government delegations (especially for smaller less experienced/specialised delegates).

Why Does the Global Plastics Treaty matter?

- The Global Plastics Treaty will be the first opportunity in history to address what national regulations cannot such as global plastic production, global plastic pollution and global finance to tackle plastic pollution.
- It will be a global avenue to unlock systemic change away from plastics at both pace and scale.
- According to scientists and attorneys, the adoption of an international legally binding agreement that addresses the entire life cycle of plastics is crucial to "match the magnitude and transboundary nature of this escalating problem and its social, environmental, and economic impacts."
- The Global Plastics Treaty is our best chance to enable/accelerate countries' adoption of the various demands GAIA and BFFP members have been making throughout the course of our work. Read GAIA/BFFP Africa Member's Demands here.
- A strong treaty could push the entire petrochemical, plastic and FMCGs (Fast Moving Consumer Goods Companies) industry to shift towards reuse and environmentally sound design.
- Finally, it has the potential to hold all signing countries to a high common minimum standard of action.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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| 2025 | Early 2025, location to be confirmed  
Conference of Plenipotentiaries adopts the treaty |
| 2024 | November 2024, Rep. Korea  
INC-5  
April 2024, Canada  
INC-4 |
| 2023 | November 2023, Kenya  
INC-3 discusses treaty zero draft  
May 2023, France  
INC-2 discusses UNEP Options Paper |
| 2022 | November 2022, Uruguay  
INC-1  
May 2022, Senegal  
Open-Ended Working Group provisionally adopts Draft Rules of Procedure  
March 2022, Kenya  
UNEA 5.2 adopts Resolution 5/14 |
Summary of the Global Plastics Treaty Negotiations Thus Far (Key Highlights)

The Negotiation Structure

The Draft Rules of Procedure for the Global Plastics Treaty that was provisionally adopted in May 2022 during the Open-Ended Working Group defines how the negotiations proceed, while the INC Bureau helps prepare INC meetings alongside the UNEP INC Secretariat headed by Ms. Jyoti Mathur-Filipp. General discussion of agenda items happen in plenary with interpretation into the 6 UN languages, while negotiations on text take place in contact groups in English only.

What happened at INC-1

Key Highs

↑ During this first week of negotiations, much time was spent on plenary statements, many of which supported a strong, binding plastic treaty with a focus on reducing plastic production & use, a recognition of the severe harms of plastic pollution across its lifecycle, and agreeing on the need to explore financial mechanisms for the implementation of the treaty.

↑ Participation from member States from Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Pacific nations—especially small island developing states—was particularly notable, bringing a strong voice for urgency and high ambition in these treaty negotiations.

↑ The leadership of waste pickers resulted in the launch of the Just Transition Initiative (building upon its earlier iteration as the Group of Friends of Wastepickers), which will ensure their representation at future INCs and bring visibility to more than 20 million people who work as waste pickers worldwide.

Key Lows

↓ Advocates expressed concerns about the presence of leading corporate polluters in the negotiation process and the lack of transparency from UNEP on how many of them were hiding behind NGO badges.

↓ Precious negotiating time and resources were also allocated to a multi-stakeholder forum.

• A roundtable discussion was organised a day before the start of the negotiations to deliver a report to the INC, despite the fact that it is not included in the mandate to develop the treaty.

• The entire enterprise appeared to be an effort to divert and prevent the voices of civil society and rights holders from direct and more meaningful forms of participation in the treaty development process.

↓ INC-1 extended its provisional adoption of the Draft Rules of Procedure after discussions failed to reach a resolution on contentious issues.

• The Rules of Procedure is a document that will determine how States and organisations can engage in future negotiations was moved for discussion into INC2.

• Rule 37 remained with brackets on voting rights.

• The outstanding issues were whether EU Member States will each have a vote or whether they will be treated as a single bloc during voting, and whether decisions should only be arrived at via consensus.

↓ By INC-1, all regions except Eastern Europe had nominated their representatives to the Bureau.

Amidst the high-level interventions, world-cup fever soon set-in and what better way than sport to bring nations together and realise their patronage to the well-being of their people and countries. The global plastics treaty should therefore seek to pay heed to the interconnectedness of people within their natural environment.

Merrisa Naidoo | GAIA Africa
What happened at INC-2

Expectations

INC-2 negotiations was expected to focus on the UNEP Options Paper, including defining treaty objectives, control measures, and aspects of implementation, and conclude by issuing a mandate for a treaty zero draft to be prepared for INC-3. Governments expressed their positions in their INC-2 submissions, as did rights-holders and industry groups.

UNEP proposed streamlining opening statements (with the option to share video recordings in advance) to leave time for negotiations. There were two contact groups as follows:

- Contact group 1 on objectives and control measures
- Contact group 2 on implementation and additional matters

Outcomes

- However, for the first two days, progress on substantive issues was held hostage by a small handful of large oil and plastic-producing countries, who raised procedural issues to delay discussions and have veto power over the treaty text by advocating for consensus only, with no opportunity for voting if consensus cannot be reached. – thereby reopening rule 38.1 on the adoption of decisions.
- The draft Rules of Procedure were still not adopted and remained applicable provisionally as agreed at INC-1. Countries agreed to an interpretive statement on rule 38.1 (the adoption of decisions by a two-thirds majority as a last resort, if every effort to reach consensus has been exhausted).
- The "provisional" draft Rules of Procedure was expected to come up again–for more time wasted–at INC-3.
- Countries—particularly from Africa and Europe—championed the need to protect voting in the INC rules.
- After two secret ballot votes, the Bureau was finally confirmed: Rwanda, Senegal, Japan, Jordan, Georgia, Estonia, Ecuador, Sweden, the United States, Antigua & Barbuda (rapporteur) and Peru (Chair elected in INC-1).
- 100+ members of civil society, scientists, and rights holders had an action highlighting the lack of access to negotiations, calling on countries to make more space for experts.
- Many countries underscored the need for a treaty that includes production caps, elimination of problematic plastics and chemicals, coverage across the entire plastics supply chain, and protection of the most impacted and vulnerable communities.
- The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, requested the Chair, with the support of the secretariat, to prepare a zero draft text of the international legally binding instrument for consideration at INC-3. The draft was to be guided by views expressed at INC-1 and INC-2 and form the basis for negotiations at INC-3.
- The Committee also requested the Secretariat to invite submissions on (a) elements not discussed at INC-2, such as principles and scope of the instrument, and (b) any potential areas for intersessional work compiled by the co-facilitators of the two contact groups, to inform the work of INC-3.

With more than 1,700 participants in (UNESCO HQ) Paris – over 700 Member State delegates from 169 Member States and over 900 observers from NGOs, this demonstrated how high the stakes were for this 2nd convening on what will form the foundational objectives; core obligations, control measures and implementing elements for the global plastics treaty.

Merrisa Naidoo | GAIA Africa
What happened at INC-3

Expectations

INC-3 negotiations were expected to engage substantive discussions on the zero draft (i.e. the initial draft of the treaty text that contained options for control measures and means of implementation that will eventually come to form the final treaty text) to progress us to a mandate for the first draft of the treaty text by INC4 and pave a clear road map on intersessional work.

Outcomes

- At INC-3, member states got through the first reading of the Zero Draft, which in the view of many was a well balanced document that captured the full suite of views and positions expressed by countries at the previous 2 INCs and could serve as the basis of the negotiations.
- The concept of “Just Transition” gained traction, thanks to the advocacy of waste pickers and indigenous peoples.
- However, a newly formed group of ‘like-minded’ (also called ‘Global Coalition for Plastics Sustainability’) plastic-producing countries were set on challenging the Zero Draft.
- These countries have repeatedly sought to delay progress within the negotiations, pushing a waste management focus and rejecting work on the upstream part of the plastic pollution issue.
- Amid the hostility, the African Group of Negotiators and Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS), stood upright and firm against the bullying and bad faith obstructionism, representing the voice of the collective conscience.
- Members of the African Group remain consistent and steadfast in the outcomes of the plastics treaty, upholding their previous decisions (i.e. AMCEN (African Ministerial Conference for the Environment) & Kampala Preparatory Meeting Decisions) and positions that serve to protect the health of the people and the environment.
- Despite the efforts by these progressive nations to salvage the 3rd round of negotiations, a critical point was reached and the failure to agree on the scope and format for intersessional work signalled a rupture in the process.
- With a revised bloated Zero Draft where all options and even null options remain on the table as opposed to the first draft treaty text and with no mandate for intersessional work, the negotiations went from a balance to a state of entropy which will make the next round of negotiations at INC4 in Canada, challenging.
- Finally, at the INC-3, there was a transition in INC chairs, with Luis Vayas of Ecuador replacing Gustavo Adolfo Meza-Cuadra Velasquez of Peru.

Before becoming a playground for bad-faith negotiators, greased hands and geopolitical tactics, attendees of the INC3 were called to welcome and embrace the spirit of Nairobi, by his excellency William Ruto, INC Executive Secretary Jyothi Mathur-filipp and Executive Director Inger Andersen, since this was the home where we got the mandate for the world’s first plastics treaty.

Jacob Johnson Attakpah | GAYO & Merrisa Naidoo | GAIA Africa
What happened at INC-4

Expectations

The Expectations going into INC-4 was for the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to:

1. Prioritise the most important binding global rules, and firmly reject any bad-faith obstructions to substantially advance & streamline the revised Zero Draft text which meant:
   - Retaining or refining Option’s 1 to reflect high ambition that provides a sufficient starting point for developing necessary harmonised and binding global rules to end plastic pollution.
   - These options should include a start-and-strengthen approach through the use of annexes to further detail the criteria, lists and timelines hinging on science-based benchmarks bound to evolve, such as volumes of plastic production consistent with safe and just levels for planetary boundaries, as well as human health impacts.
   - Other options could be consolidated into a low ambition alternative, to capture the full spectrum of views, without making the draft unmanageably long and repetitive

2. Create and mandate a Legal Drafting Group
   - The role of the Legal Drafting Group would be to convert the Treaty Text to have legal weight and legal language thereby making it functional.
   - The Legal Drafting Group will comprise Member States, but technical experts can support them to advise in the setting of legal language.
   - It is standard practice to establish the Legal Drafting Group from early on in the negotiations.

3. Set up a mandate for Intersessional Work between INC-4 and INC-5
   - A mandate to have intersessional work was important to advance specific topics before INC-5. With limited negotiating time, it was critical that at INC-4, negotiators agreed to a defined programme of intersessional work.

4. Contact Group Structure
   - At INC-4, member States needed to carefully consider the order in which they discuss themes and the revised zero draft provisions during contact groups, ensuring that substantive matters are given priority attention.

Amidst the pride of the maple leaf, the vision for the 4th session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee (INC4), to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment which took place from 23 to 29 April 2024 at the Shaw Center in Ottawa, Canada; was more clear than ever despite a year long of stalled negotiations.
Merrisa Naidoo | GAIA Africa
Outcomes

Positive Outcomes

1. Streamlined Text + Line-by-Line Negotiations
   - The negotiations have finally gotten to a point of streamlined text on many of the provisions (i.e. reduced number of options for each provision in most cases) and also began line-by-line text negotiations. However, for every provision most of the text currently exists in brackets (i.e. suggested to either be deleted or revised with additions).

2. Currently everything still stands on the table and nothing is lost (from weaker text proposals to stronger & more ambitious text proposals).

3. Based on the negotiations that took place within the sub-groups a compiled text and INC-4 Report has been made available.

4. 65 champion countries spoke out in support for global plastic production reduction targets, led by Rwanda & Peru who came up with a proposal to reduce primary plastic polymers by 40% by 2040, but this support wears thin when met with compromise.

5. A vast majority of countries recognise the need to end plastic pollution to protect human health and the environment, a stark contrast to the false narrative that “Plastics Saves Lives.”


7. There was broad support regarding transparency, tracking, and labelling of chemicals.

8. The EU and its Member States stated that alternative plastics are still plastics.

9. A few countries cited key science & literature in their interventions that support the reduction of Primary Plastic Polymers to stay within the 1.5-degree mark of the Paris Agreement (i.e., Philippines and Rwanda notably)

10. The final hours of the INC-4 many countries supported the participation of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Intersessional Work, recognising them as key resource people especially to Global South delegations, particularly the African countries and this was the first time in the history of the INCs that the technical expertise of CSOs were recognised as being key to the achievement of the final treaty instrument.
   - However, what this participation will look like was yet to be defined by the INC chair.

11. The chair’s proposal to establish a Legal Drafting Group was accepted.

Compromised Outcomes

1. Despite INC-4, closing with an agreed mandate for Intersessional Work (IW) (meeting between INC-4 & INC-5,a type of negotiations but not a decider) which was based on a proposal from the INC Chair, this proposal was highly contentious and was what led to negotiations running into the early hours of the morning on the final day of the INC-4.
   - As it stands, it was decided that there will be Intersessional Work on Treaty Finance and Criteria of chemicals and polymers of concern, and problematic and avoidable plastic products, in the form of 2 ad-hoc open-ended working groups. Each and every section will be negotiated in Intersessional Work for these provisions and the Intersessional Work will recommend outcomes to INC-5, but INC-5 will decide the final text.
   - The main issues on Intersessional Work were; the chair’s proposal appeared to be pre-determining that the financial mechanism for the treaty will be based on existing funding and resources which are not as accessible or enough to meet the scale of the plastic crisis, as opposed to a new dedicated fund which many countries including the African Group of Negotiators were strong in calling for.
The Chair’s Original Proposal for Intersessional Work

Red Highlight = Weak/Vague Language
Green Highlight = Strong/Ambitious Language

1. The committee decides to establish an ad hoc intersessional open-ended expert group to develop an analysis of potential resources and means that could be mobilised, for implementation of the objectives of the instrument, including from the financial mechanism, by aligning financial flows, catalysing finance, and enhancing resource transparency, for the consideration by the committee at its fifth session.

2. The committee also decides to establish an ad hoc intersessional open-ended expert group to propose criteria on plastic products and chemicals of concern, including those related to product design, and consider their uses and applications, for the consideration by the committee at its fifth session.

Compromised Text for Intersessional Work

However, a compromised text on Intersessional Work for both these topics was reached.

1. The committee decides to establish an ad hoc intersessional open-ended expert group to develop an analysis of potential sources and means that could be mobilised for implementation of the objectives of the instrument, including options for the establishment of a financial mechanism, alignment of financial flows, and catalysing finance, for the consideration by the committee at its fifth session.

2. The committee also decides to establish an ad hoc intersessional open-ended expert group to identify and analyse criteria and non-criteria-based approaches with regard to plastic products and chemicals of concern in plastic products and products design, focused on recyclability and reusability of plastic products, considering its uses and applications, for the consideration by the committee at INC-5.

Missed Opportunity for Intersessional Work on Primary Plastic Polymers

- Many ally countries conceded too early for intersessional work on Primary Plastic Polymers.
- In the penultimate Plenary session, more than 50 countries also called for Intersessional Work on Primary Plastic Polymers, in support of the Rwanda–Peru proposal, however this call failed to be captured by the INC Chair on the last night when the topic of Intersessional Work was brought up for discussion again and despite the utter disappointment expressed by Rwanda–Peru.
- Many of the Global North countries breached their support for Intersessional Work on Primary Plastic Polymers at the 11th hour which led to others including the PSIDS to roll-over in the “so-called” spirit of compromise or consensus.
Other Missed Opportunities & Areas of Contention

1. To many brackets = Much to achieve at INC-5 (a bewildering 3686 brackets remain to be resolved before INC-5 in Busan)

2. Transparency of the INC Chair is concerning
   - In the interest of keeping peace with the like-minded group, the chair is forcing the majority of ambitious countries to roll-over – This has been a contributing factor for missing the opportunity for Intercessional Work on Primary Plastic Polymers despite prior consultations on Intercessional Work & also a lack of clarity on CSO (Civil Society Organisations) participation in Intercessional Work.

3. Politics at Play
   - Some delegates were choosing to keep quiet due to political lack of power and assumptions that their ideas were already covered.
   - The Global South countries who are fighting tooth and nail for a strong plastics treaty were steamrolled by the will of wealthy nations.
   - The debate over Intercessional Work was a proxy for the geopolitical divides that exist between the Global North and the Global South.

4. The Global Plastics Pollution Fee did not get enough support. A funding mechanism that countries can support to fund upstream measures is still needed.

5. The right to development, and CBDR (Common But Differentiated Responsibilities) is often mentioned (particularly in GRULAC, India, and by countries of the like-minded group) to avoid commitment to global legally binding provisions under the treaty.

   CBDR – principle of international environmental law establishing that all states are responsible for addressing global environmental destruction yet not equally responsible.

6. Some member states continue to state that there is not enough scientific-evidence on the harmful impacts plastics as derailing tactics.

7. Spaces for Indigenous Peoples to participate and to engage continue to be very limited

8. When mentioning “life cycle” it still often excludes extraction.

9. It was unclear whether observers can participate in the ad hoc open-ended expert groups.

10. Some member states continued to focus on plastic recycling and downstream measures to address the plastic pollution crisis.

Key Levers of Opportunity

- So far, 34 Member States have signed onto the “Bridge to Busan,” a declaration which indicates that there is still a political appetite to reduce plastic production.

- There is growing collaboration among Member States who see that there are ways to enhance reuse systems on the demand side of things.

- The linkage between climate and plastics continued to grow and strengthen.

- There seems to be more opportunities to engage parliamentarians & ministers in the Plastics Treaty process.

- Human health continues to get mentioned as an important aspect to consider throughout the life cycle of plastics.

- There are opportunities to strengthen the case for Economic opportunities in line with Phasing out Plastics.
What happens after the Global Plastics Treaty negotiations?

Once the negotiations are complete and a treaty text is agreed upon, there will be a period of time for countries to sign the treaty and ratify it according to a State’s own processes. It’s likely that there will be a lot of work for specialised committees to develop specific criterias, lists and processes. Each country that has become a party to the treaty will probably have substantial work to develop their national action plans and to turn treaty obligations into national law. There will need to be continued engagement by NGOs in every country for years to come to make sure the implementation is as ambitious as possible. There will also be regular Conference of Parties (COPs) meetings where further decisions will be made.

- The institutional makeup is still undetermined but one option is a treaty that would have a mix of global obligations and National Action Plans.
- Once the treaty is finalised, countries will have the option to ratify it or not.
- If they do, there’s an opportunity to strengthen and harmonise national regulations to combat plastic pollution, towards a common global goal – global common ground.
- Countries remain free to legislate additional or more ambitious controls.

What are the risks within the Global Plastics Treaty

- As with any policy process, the end result is dependent on the balance of power and negotiations between different parties. In this case, countries that have a significant stake in the fossil fuel industry are pushing for a weaker treaty, and countries facing significant adverse effects of plastic pollution want to see stronger, legally binding controls and upstream measures (such as the Africa Region and PSIDS). We are still seeing many countries thinking that we can end plastic pollution by simply changing things in the midstream and downstream phases of the plastic lifecycle. These countries are deliberately ignoring any meaningful conversation in reducing plastic production and are instead touting that better design, alternative materials, and enhanced mitigation through technological advances will end plastic pollution. However, in the face of unfettered growth in plastic production, increasing exponentially over time, these changes will be nothing but a drop in a bucket and will fall far too short for us to envision a future with no plastic pollution.
- Whether or not the treaty contains binding measures that are applicable to all parties is in question, with a strong push for nationally determined action plans as the main or only way the treaty goals are implemented. Another risky aspect is the timeline for negotiations. Countries aim to negotiate the whole treaty in only two years, a very short timeline. This means that significant compromises may have to be made in order to stick to the timeline. There is also a risk that the whole treaty negotiation falls apart! This is why public pressure is so essential, the negotiators and governments need to feel that the world is watching them.
What are African Civil Society’s Priorities for the Global Plastics Treaty

What do we want?

We now have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to end the plastic age through the global plastics treaty.

The members of the GAIA and BFFP movements in Africa have identified eight priority areas for a strong treaty with specific demands for each. Cutting across all these demands is the need to respect planetary boundaries in order to protect life on Earth, prioritising the upholding of human rights for current and future generations, ensuring a just transition for communities and workers across the plastics lifecycle, including waste pickers, and the guaranteeing of meaningful engagement of vulnerable groups, impacted communities, and Indigenous Peoples. Nine planetary boundaries have been identified to date: climate change, stratospheric ozone depletion, atmospheric aerosol loading, ocean acidification, altered biogeochemical flows (phosphorus and nitrogen cycles), freshwater use, land-system change, loss of biosphere integrity, and novel entities. Plastics are a type of novel entities which contribute to weakening all other boundaries.

The priorities put forward require the appropriate measures to ensure an effective and comprehensive treaty with strict baseline assessments, timebound targets, reporting and evaluation mechanisms. Only by addressing each of these priorities will the new instrument be fit to end plastic pollution across the entire lifecycle.

Reading resources

Policy Brief: Role of chemicals and polymers of concern in the global plastics treaty - Ikhapp

Global Plastics Treaty Explainer Video - The Process

Watch now

The U.N. is Negotiating a Treaty that Could Solve the Plastic Problem. Here’s What You Need to Know.

This video is meant to be used as a tool for GAIA members and allies to help reach YOUR treaty campaign objectives!

The video highlights leadership from the Global South—we didn’t start the plastic crisis, but together, we can end it. The video is dubbed into English, French, Portuguese, Arabic, and subtitled in Swahili.
Key Messages on African Civil Society Priorities for the Global Plastics Treaty


NB. Includes Control Measures for the Use and Trade of Plastics

Key Points to Communicate:

1. Plastic production is underpinned by highly impactful fossil-fueled petrochemical processes that incur costs to health, livelihoods and infringe upon human rights, particularly of fenceline communities and workers in production facilities.

2. It is therefore, vital that the treaty prioritises upstream measures, starting with the measures that can deliver a phasedown of plastic production to sustainable levels, compatible with human health, human rights and the environment through:
   - The development of global, legally binding, production freeze and phasedown targets by a specific point in time.
   - Ending plastics subsidies and subsidies for fossil fuels used in plastic manufacture (such as feedstocks or energy sources), especially for new infrastructure to internalise the externalities of plastic pollution in the cost of production.

Why is this Priority Relevant to the African Context:

The majority of African countries are not net producers of plastics and should, therefore, be more ambitious in calling for an overall reduction on plastic production. The plastic crisis faced by African countries cannot be solved by waste management infrastructure unless combined with production regulations. Africa’s sovereignty is undermined by toxic and non-recyclable plastic waste exports in the form of waste colonialism from high-producing Global North countries, which disproportionately harms low-income communities and informal sector workers on the continent, violating their human right to a clean, safe and healthy environment that is toxic-free.
4.2 Identifying and regulating toxic and hazardous chemicals and monomers/oligomers/polymers of concern.

NB. Includes control measures for bans and phaseouts, trade, transparency, tracking, monitoring and labelling

Key Points to Communicate:

1. More than 13,000 chemicals are used in plastics, of which >3,200 are classified as hazardous. This means they are officially recognised to be toxic, persistent or have other concerning properties such as leaching into our food, homes, and the environment, adversely affecting human health and the environment.

2. Only 4% of these chemicals are regulated globally.

3. The Global Plastics Treaty must, therefore, based on known or potential adverse effects on human health or the environment and through a central independent scientific and technical body (including indigenous science and traditional knowledge) prioritise:
   - Criteria for Transparency (eg. a globally harmonised information system) in identifying and regulating toxic and hazardous chemicals and monomers/oligomers/polymers of concern for an immediate ban or gradual phaseout including for production volumes, exports and imports.
   - Traceability of disclosed chemical information linked to individual materials and products throughout their respective life cycles is easily accessible.
   - Access to chemical information for all plastic types, including plastic produced using renewable sources (e.g. bioplastics).
   - Associated negative list chemicals listing toxic additives, chemicals and monomers/oligomers/polymers using a class-based approach – grouping chemicals by families for efficient regulation and to avoid regrettable substitution.
   - Application of the precautionary principle for chemicals and monomers/oligomers/polymers with no data or information, and thus requiring further research, should not be allowed on the market, in line with a “no data, no market” approach.
   - Criteria and process for granting essential use exemptions.
   - Comprehensive definitions for plastic chemicals and polymers of concern.
   - Provisions to ensure that chemicals, groups of chemicals and polymers that are hazardous or of concern listed in the instrument (annex) are not exported or imported on their own, in plastic materials, in products or in waste.

Why is this Priority Relevant to the African Context:

African markets are open to a variety of plastic products without specific regulations on composition or systems to avoid the presence of hazardous chemicals. Beyond that, in South Africa alone, there are more than 90,000 waste pickers whose health is at risk from the toxic exposure of handling plastics.

Marginalised communities, children and women are also the most vulnerable groups impacted by plastics and its associated chemicals. In a study by IPEN, 2017 (the International POPs Elimination Network), children’s toys surveyed from 26 different countries, including countries in Africa, were made from recycled plastic of electronic equipment and were found to contain toxic flame retardant chemicals. These chemicals are hazardous to public health, especially children. They can harm the nervous system, human hormone system and reproductive system and create adverse effects on children’s brain development.
Guarantee the inclusion, integration, just transition and accessibility of waste pickers and frontline communities into national waste management policies and the Global Plastics Treaty process.

Key Points to Communicate:

1. All measures taken in regulating the plastic life cycle must be seen through a just transition lens for all workers and communities affected by transformative changes in the global plastics economy.

2. Recognition and priority must be given to the important role waste pickers and waste workers play in cooperative settings and, as such, constitute the backbone of the waste collection and sorting systems in most countries.

3. Therefore, criteria for a just transition should be co-developed and aim to ensure:
   - Maximum social and economic opportunities for ending plastic pollution while minimising and carefully managing any challenges – including through effective social dialogue among all groups impacted and respect for fundamental human rights.
   - Preventing new and similar dependencies from being created by targeting systemic change and setting the framework for equity.

Why is this Priority Relevant to the African Context:

Waste picker organising and formalisation has been on the rise in Africa, with countries like South Africa and Kenya leading the way. Statistics show that waste pickers in South Africa recover between 80 to 90% of the post-consumption packaging and paper from being diverted to the landfill. The value of waste picker organising in Africa and worldwide ensures that waste pickers are recognised, their voices are heard and their profession is given the dignity and respect it deserves. The inclusion of informal waste workers in Ghana has also helped to increase waste management services across the 261 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) to 80% across the country. Similar successes from the formal recognition and integration of waste pickers and the informal waste sector are being seen in Kenya, Morocco and Zambia. For more on the role of waste pickers.
4.4 Harmonised standards and guidelines for environmentally sound plastic waste management.

NB. Includes Control Measures for technology transfer.

Key Points to Communicate:

1. Criteria for waste management financing and technology transfer must include the following limits to ensure the protection of human health, environmental justice, waste pickers’ livelihoods and planetary boundaries and should be set in a treaty annex and periodically reviewed and strengthened with the advent of technological improvements or planetary boundary changes, such as:
   - Carbon intensity
   - Microplastic emissions
   - Level of toxic process emissions
   - Level of toxics in recyclate and other by-products
   - Water intensity
   - Material intensity
   - Land intensity
   - Prohibit dangerous practices such as open burning, incineration, chemical recycling, co-processing in cement kilns and waste-to-energy processes as acceptable mechanisms for environmentally sound management, given their harms to the environment, health and the climate.
   - Prevent plastic credits and any similar mechanisms that enable indiscriminate plastic production and use at the cost of vulnerable communities.
   - Legislation and plastic waste management facility licensing regulations to prevent the accumulation of pollution-generating facilities in overburdened communities ensued through community consultations and environmental justice legislation.
   - Require binding EPR schemes that prioritise reuse over recycling, support waste pickers, and mandate producer responsibility for the full cost of plastic waste management.

2. Recognise the value of decentralised waste management systems (e.g. for collection) that are compatible with the zero waste hierarchy.

Why is this Priority Relevant to the African Context:

Ninety Percent of the waste generated in Africa is discarded in unregulated dumpsites and landfills, frequently accompanied by the common practice of open burning. This prevailing waste management approach not only gives rise to environmental issues but also poses considerable health risks. The practice of open burning and incomplete incineration can cause the release of dangerous toxic gases and persistent organic pollutants (POPs) into the atmosphere. In recent air pollution assessments, open burning of mismanaged plastic waste caused the release of 233 kilotonnes of noxious chemical gases in Kenya. POPs were also found to be present in free-range chicken eggs located close to open burning plastic waste sites in Africa, suggesting severe contamination of food chains.
End of waste colonialism and dumping on the African continent.

NB. Includes Control Measures on the trade of plastics and plastic waste.

Key Points to Communicate:

1. Africa is not yet free from colonialism; colonialism continues to manifest itself in the form of waste trade that allows for the importation of toxic and non-recyclable waste into the African continent from Global North countries.

2. Trade loopholes under the Global Plastics Treaty must, therefore, be closed through:
   - A global plastics trade tracking system across the plastics lifecycle
   - Trade ban on plastics and associated chemicals after their phase-out except for their environmentally sound disposal, and only when exporting countries lack the appropriate infrastructure for these operations or when it comprises the internalisation of costs from less industrialised to rich/industrialised economies.
   - Ban all plastic waste exports to non-OECD countries and strictly minimise all other plastic waste trade.
   - Ban the export of plastic waste for thermal treatment, including waste-to-energy, incineration, co-processing, and plastic-to-fuel processes.
   - Enforce existing restrictions on plastic waste exports under the Basel Convention and at the regional and national levels.
   - Harmonise all definitions of plastic waste in national and regional legislation, as well as in a global plastics treaty, with the Basel Convention, to avoid loopholes where wastes escape controls by being recast as products (e.g. refuse-derived fuel).
   - Strengthen the Y48 listing of plastic wastes in annex II of the Basel Convention to explicitly include paper waste contaminated with plastics, textile wastes and refuse-derived fuel, to end the dumping of those mixed plastic wastes in the African continent.

Why is this Priority Relevant to the African Context:

The manifestations of waste colonialism in Africa come in all shapes and forms, from electronic waste in Ghana’s most notorious E-waste dump to 282 illegal containers of plastic waste being exported from Italy to Tunisia as mixed municipal waste, to Accra’s markets & Kenya’s rivers flooded with Europe’s addiction to fast fashion and the US illegally exporting harmful PVC plastic into the Nigerian economy. This unjust practice leaves Africa and its future generations to shoulder the economic, social and environmental costs. It is a lack of respect for the sovereignty of Africa and the laws of the land that serve to protect its people. All countries need to take responsibility for how they produce, manage and dispose of their waste and find better solutions for their waste instead of externalising the problem.
4.6 Strengthen Standards and Guidelines for EPR (Extended Producer Responsibility).

Key Points to Communicate:

1. Current EPR schemes predominantly operate in the downstream phases of the plastics lifecycle, are misconstrued to reduce plastic production, underpinned by voluntary agreements and are often exclusionary of the informal waste sector.

2. The global plastics treaty should therefore, require that EPR standards and guidelines are national, mandatory and strengthened to:
   - Integrate waste pickers and other waste workers, including workers in informal and cooperative settings, that support existing municipal waste management systems, and recognise the preexistence of these stakeholders in places where they work.
   - Mandate that producers and importers assume full financial responsibility for all costs associated with plastic waste management, including collection, transport and processing costs of both recyclable and residual fractions, public communication and education, independent auditing and oversight, and administrative costs.
   - Are piloted and regulated by governments, with public oversight on compliance, enforcement, reporting, and require spaces for public input and participatory planning.
   - Respect the waste hierarchy by:
     - using effectively-priced eco-modulation to reward redesign for reduction and reuse over recycling and penalise single-use products
     - allocating EPR funding along the waste hierarchy, prioritising reduction and reuse.

Why is this Priority Relevant to the African Context:

Whilst Africa's plastic production and use appear low compared to the rest of the world, the increase in imported manufactured plastic items and packaging into African countries is cause for concern. Numerous global consumer brands are attempting to increase their presence in Africa, implying an impending surge in imports in the absence of significant investment in infrastructure to address the final disposal of these plastic products and packaging, which is where stringent EPR regulations will need to come in. Illegal plastic waste exports in the form of e-waste, mixed municipal waste and textile waste into the continent from higher-income Global North countries further perpetuate the burden of toxic and non-recyclable waste onto already strained resources, economies, infrastructure, worker’s rights and the overall health of the environment.
4.7 Robust Financial Mechanism to Support the Effective Implementation of the Treaty.

NB. Includes Control Measures on what should and should not be funded, mobilisation of private and public funds

Key Points to Communicate:

1. A robust financial mechanism that is fit to mobilise the scale of resources needed to end plastic pollution should be established through a new dedicated fund that is predictable, sustainable, adequate, accessible, stable and timely to support the implementation and compliance of the instrument, particularly by least developing country parties, SIDS (Small Island Developing States) and economies in transition.

2. The various areas where new financial resources should be forthcoming can be divided into and delivered on a grant basis:
   - Enabling activities: activities necessary to pave the way for or enable compliance. For example: (i) institutional strengthening; (ii) reporting and monitoring; (iii) policy development, including national action plans and extended producer responsibility schemes; (iv) capacity-building and training; (v) pilot and demonstration projects.
   - Incremental Costs: those extra expenses related to compliance with the new global commitments, which should also include a support fund for loss and damage and related to promoting and facilitating a just transition.

3. The new dedicated fund must also be supported by and complemented through:
   - Coordinated access to existing multilateral funding:
     - Those costs associated with implementing the new instrument that are not covered on a grant basis will also need to be resourced through a financial mechanism. These funds may be provided on a concessional basis. Such concessional financing may, for example, target high-impact projects responding to the plastic pollution crisis that otherwise could not go ahead without financial support.
     - This will require coordinated access to the Global Environment Facility (GEF), multilateral development banks and other concessional financing to deliver these funds. This may be enabled through an administrative window between the secretariat of the financial mechanism and those existing multilateral funds.
Private sector funds:

- Mobilising the private sector through a clear expression of the Polluter Pays Principle will also be an essential aspect of the financial mechanism, including through a Global Plastic Pollution Fee (GPPF) whilst being mindful that these fees do not imply the perpetuation of exponential plastic production and constitute a licence to pollute.

Domestic funds;

Public funds.

4. Multilateral investment and financial support to enable compliance should strictly follow the zero waste hierarchy, focusing investment on initiatives that target waste prevention, reuse systems and preparation for reuse instead of downstream interventions such as recycling and end-of-life treatment.

5. Limits to what the financial mechanism and private finance funds should be imposed on:

- Only truly environmentally sound waste management processes that are viewed as acceptable for dissemination through financing and therefore exclude financing for dangerous waste management practices such as incineration, firing in coal-fired power plants and other waste-to-energy processes, co-processing in cement kilns, and chemical recycling and plastics alternatives that are not sustainable (e.g., single-use bio-based plastics).

- Avoiding carbon or plastic credits and offset schemes - these schemes are misconstrued to reduce plastic production and, therefore, do not contribute to a solution to the plastics crisis. More importantly, they are not a genuine application of the polluters pay principle. Credits are used to justify the continued use of single-use plastic by credit buyers and do not reduce overall plastic pollution. Plastic offsetting fails to recognise other types of pollution from plastics other than litter, and schemes often rely on burning plastic in cement kilns to dispose of waste, generating air pollution and damaging the health of local communities. The treaty must not recognise plastic credits, offsetting, or the term ‘plastic neutral’ as an eligible way to claim plastic reduction. In addition, discussions on innovative financing, such as plastic credits, must not distract from the vital discussions on dedicated financing.

Why is this Priority Relevant to the African Context:

A dedicated financial mechanism for eligible developing countries and especially Africa, to implement the desired objectives of the treaty is essential, as it has been previously reiterated the majority of African countries are not net producers of plastics yet meet a multitude of challenges including lack of resources and technological and financial capacity to manage various aspects relating to plastics pollution. Therefore, consideration of the unique needs of the African continent in relation to financial assistance, capacity building, and technical assistance needs to be underscored.
Support the Institution of a Dedicated Global Scientific Body for the Treaty.

Key Points to Communicate:

1. The independent Scientific body is an important component of the instrument and should:
   - Complement the Science Policy Panel (SPP) for Chemicals, Pollution, and Waste;
   - Review plastic production targets and their associated schedule;
   - Adopt baselines for plastic pollution and toxic exposure monitoring standards;
   - Establish harmonised standards, methodologies, metrics and definitions used in monitoring and assessments;
   - Review the proposals to add or update the criteria for chemicals of concern;
   - Provide other relevant guidance for national monitoring efforts;
   - Periodically evaluate the global environmental and health impact of plastic pollution, for ecosystems, the climate system, biodiversity and human health, as well as its direct and indirect economic cost;
   - Periodically assess how plastics impact environmental justice, Indigenous rights and human rights across their lifecycle;
   - Mandate the scientific body to use all the monitoring and assessment data above to detect and report treaty effectiveness and compliance challenges.

2. The body should be free from conflicts of interest with corporations with a financial stake in the life cycle of plastics and hosted by the Secretariat with representation at the national focal points.

3. The treaty scientific body must be composed of independent scientists and a wide range of experts (including the Indigenous community) as recognised rights holders with a guarantee of participation, where indigenous and traditional knowledge has equal footing with scientific knowledge, reflect regional, gendered, disciplinary, sectoral, and multi-stakeholder representation.

Why is this Priority Relevant to the African Context:

The inclusion of experts from Africa within the dedicated scientific body for the global plastics treaty will contribute to the expansion of scientific knowledge on the continent on technical and inadequately researched topics such as microplastics and nanomaterials and others whilst ensuring the realities and capabilities of the region is reflected to inform decisions taken on thresholds and criteria developed.
How can these key messages be put into practice

1. **Influence the negotiating positions of your Country’s Focal Point for the Global Plastics Treaty by:**
   - Building or strengthening your relationship with them.
   - Designing an influential campaign on plastic policy design and implementation/enforcement.
   - Become a resource person to them.

2. **Develop a strategy to synergize movement-building work with the treaty work. Some examples include:**
   - Bringing GAIA/BFFP members and allies (e.g., waste pickers, reuse businesses) in a given country together around a single plastic policy national strategy e.g., virtual or in-person meetings of members and allies.
   - A communications campaign that links the treaty to domestic action e.g., social media campaigns, engaging with journalists, etc.
   - A national policy advocacy or organising strategy such as meeting with government officials and other stakeholders.
   - A local implementation campaign that will provide an example of best practice.
   - Capacity-building workshops on the Global Plastics Treaty.

3. **Create National Policy Impacts**
   For example:
   - A campaign to pass a strong national law on SUPs.
   - A social media campaign that galvanises public interest in the issue.
   - Documenting an alternative success story, like an operating refillable system.

**INC Guide for CSOs**

**Peer Learning**

**Government Engagement Workshop**
5 Campaigning Initiatives Tools and Strategies for Change

Other ways you can become a leader in the Global Plastics Treaty Space?

1. Support the demands of the GAIA/BFFP movement
   - **Endorse the open letter to Global Plastics Treaty negotiators** to ask them to prioritize a cap on plastic production in this imminent international piece of legislation.
   - **Sign the Public petition** calling on governments to ensure that the emerging instrument includes various BFFP demands.

2. Gather a community of supporters together to learn about the treaty and do some fun activities together is a great way to spread the word about solving plastic pollution and amplifying community voices to policymakers
   - Host a screening of the Story of Plastic and have discussions afterwards. **Ask participants to sign the treaty petition** and maybe take another action. The Story of Plastic can be request at merrisa@no-burn.org.
   - **Show this shorter treaty explainer video from Story of Stuff.**
   - Write letters with your community that you can post to the relevant minister or Country Contact Point. See the section below on letter writing for more information. The template letter can easily be adapted, and you can add your own personality to the letter - such as how plastic pollution impacts you and your children, community or country.
   - Get community members to make some art work, banners or take photos that could be used on social media targeting policy makers, or printed and posted to them.
   - **Hold a brand audit** while educating people on the plastics treaty, and as a call to action they can sign the petition and write a letter.
Tips on developing a campaign

To kick off your campaign activities, read and understand your country’s submission. You can do this by visiting UNEP’s INCs Sessions Page (from INC-1 to INC-5). If you need help understanding your country’s submissions, feel free to contact our Africa Plastics Campaigner, Merrisa Naidoo, via merrisa@no-burn.org.

Read our top priorities and key talking points above to design the focus of your campaign. Choose a focus that resonates with your work.

Identify your target audience, and think about how you will reach them and what you want them to do. Use our audience mapping template to brainstorm your ideas. Some examples of groups you may want to influence:

- INC Focal Points from African Member States;
- Waste Pickers;
- Indigenous Peoples;
- Women;
- Youth;
- Grassroots Organisations;
- Community and Traditional Leaders;
- Local and National Media.

Once you have deliberated who your target audience is, plan an activity that will allow you to get your message across to them. See some examples of planned activities below!

**Deliver a letter to your local government**

Adapt our template letter (see below) to share with your local government. Get creative and plan a march or demonstration to commemorate the delivery of your letter to your local leaders.

**Organise a virtual event**

Invite your online community (media, government or other organisations) to an online event to create more awareness about the Global Plastic Treaty. We have developed a template slide deck which you can adapt!

**Engage with media**

There are lots of ways you can engage the media. Start by compiling a list of local media and national media contacts. Invite all your media contacts to your online events and local media contacts to your in-person events. Consider writing an opinion piece for a media outlet, and read about some best practices when working with the media on an op-ed.

Interviews on radio and television are also an excellent way to create awareness and reach a broad audience. Consider generating media yourself by hosting a radio show or podcast. Read our template radio script (see below).
Tools to support your Campaigns

Webinar Series
Towards a Global Plastic Treaty

A 5-part series on the global plastic treaty covering a broad range of treaty-related topics, from finance and the treaty to unpacking the zero draft. This series is your one-stop shop.

Watch the webinar here.

Podcast
Global Plastic Treaty Podcast Conversations

The Africa For Zero Waste Podcast offers innovative perspectives on zero waste within the African context. While zero waste is often perceived as a pursuit for affluent, eco-conscious individuals in high-income countries, successful implementation in Africa can integrate traditional knowledge and existing preservation practices, making it a holistic approach.

During the Global Plastic Treaty Negotiations, the podcast has provided valuable insights, recapping the INCs and exploring key themes from the ongoing discussions. Tune in for a roundup of some of our episodes and join the conversation on how zero waste can transform communities in Africa.

Listen to the podcast here.

Video
Story of Stuff – The U.N. is Negotiating a Treaty that Could Solve the Plastic Problem. Here’s What You Need to Know.

Watch the video here.
Dear [full title and name of person according to your culture],

On behalf of [name of your organisation or group of organisations], as citizens of [your country name], we are writing to you to express our sincere hopes that the Government of [name of country] will support a strong and ambitious Global Plastics Treaty that addresses the full life cycle of plastic.

Plastic is a growing crisis with a devastating impact on the environment, human health, human rights, environmental justice, the rights of Indigenous Peoples, biodiversity, and climate. Global actions to address this crisis are urgently needed. As numerous studies have demonstrated, plastic has been found everywhere, not only in ecosystems and the atmosphere but also in the food we eat, the water we drink, and even inside our bodies.

[Add in information about specific plastic impacts in your country or that you encounter in your work. Human impacts are always especially powerful for politicians.]

Plastics are also linked to the climate crisis, as most plastics are made from fossil fuels. An international coalition of independent scientists states that 'Studies estimate that plastics account for around 3-8% of global GHG emissions, and it is projected to double by 2060...and estimates indicate that plastics and other petrochemicals industries will drive half of the growth in demand for fossil fuel production by 2050.'

For the plastics treaty to be successful in reducing plastic pollution across the plastics life cycle, and for it to protect human health and wellbeing, our organisation joins the calls of many civil society organisations across Africa at this time, calling on our Leaders within the plastic treaty space to join us in prioritising the following for a Strong Global Plastics Treaty:

- Substantially reduce aggregate global plastic production to protect human and environmental health, uphold human rights for current and future generations, and respect planetary boundaries.
- Prioritise the reduction of plastics and expand the implementation of reuse systems rather than relying on recycling, bio-based, biodegradable, and compostable plastics, and non-plastic alternatives.
- Establish transparency standards that include a complete identification, elimination, and traceability of chemicals, including polymers, that are hazardous or of concern, across the full lifecycle of plastics to regulate these chemicals by group, based on the no data no market principle.
- Eliminate highly problematic plastic products and materials.
- Develop and implement tailored measures to prevent microplastic pollution at source and across the full lifecycle of plastics, including alternatives and substitutes.
- Apply the zero-waste hierarchy, applying the prevention and precautionary principles to chemicals, polymers, and plastic products and their alternatives and substitutes across their full lifecycle, and prohibit waste management technologies and systems assessed as unsafe, unsustainable, non-transparent, and non-essential by an independent expert subsidiary body of multi-stakeholders under the instrument.
- Include a strong financial mechanism that adheres to the zero-waste hierarchy to facilitate the flows of financial resources from the developed to the developing countries while paying special attention to Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs).
- Consider capacity building and technical and financial assistance for effective implementation of the treaty by developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

- Establish a multistakeholder science-policy interface (including rightful knowledge holders and socioeconomic expert groups) as a subsidiary body of the instrument established with the support of a robust conflict of interest policy.

- Develop dedicated standards and guidelines to ensure that plastic waste management practices exclude polluting technologies and practices such as open burning, incineration, chemical recycling and the like.

- Acknowledge that Africa is not yet free from colonialism; and it continues to manifest itself in the form of waste trade that allows for the importation of toxic and non-recyclable waste into the African continent from Global North countries. Trade loopholes under the Global Plastics Treaty must therefore be closed through a global plastics trade tracking system, trade bans on plastics & associated chemicals after their phase-out, strengthening the Y48 listing of plastics waste in annex II of the Basel Convention to explicitly include paper waste contaminated with plastics, textiles, and Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) to end dumping of those mixed plastic wastes on the continent.

- Require that EPR standards and guidelines are national, mandatory and strengthened to integrated waste pickers and other waste workers and respect the waste hierarchy, prioritising prevention and reuse over recycling.

- All measures taken in regulating the plastic life cycles must be seen through a just transition lens for all workers affected by transformative changes in the global plastics economy. However, Recognition & Priority must be given for the important role waste pickers and waste workers play in cooperative settings who divert more than 60% of waste from landfills.

- To conclude, CSOs (Civil Society Organisations) are also aware that a strong Plastics Treaty is only possible with a clear procedure for decision-making. Therefore, a proactive effort is advised to settle the debate on the Draft Rules of Procedure. This may be done without compromising contact group time, through an informal “friends of the Chair” group.

Cutting across all these demands is the need to respect planetary boundaries in order to protect life on Earth, prioritising the upholding of human rights for current and future generations, ensuring a just transition for communities and workers across the plastics lifecycle, including waste pickers, and guaranteeing of meaningful engagement of vulnerable groups, impacted communities, and Indigenous Peoples. Many of these demands also require the appropriate measures to ensure an effective and comprehensive treaty with strict baseline assessments, timebound targets, reporting and evaluation mechanisms. Only by addressing each of these priorities will the new instrument be fit to end plastic pollution across the entire lifecycle.

[Finish with a point specific to your country or the politician you are writing to. Maybe they have made a commitment to tackle plastic pollution or climate change? Write something directly relevant here.]

Finally, Africa is a continent of 54 countries and there is power in this number.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss your position on the Global Plastics Treaty, or any of these priorities. Thank you for your work on this vital topic.

Yours sincerely,

[Names, job title and organisation of each signatory]
Dialogues for Engagements

Template

Feel free to customise!

Find the editable template here

Title of Dialogue for Engagements
Topic Title

Introduction: [The host introduces themselves, the guest speakers and the topic for conversation].

Overview of the Plastic Crisis & Global Plastic Treaty: The plastic pollution crisis has deepened existing injustices caused by colonialism, slavery, racism and capitalism that exceed our planetary boundaries and disproportionately harm low-income communities and, in particular, black, brown and indigenous communities. It deprives waste pickers of their rights to earn a safe and fair livelihood. In March 2022, during the fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-5.2), a resolution was adopted to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution. This was a momentous moment; there have been four negotiation sessions, including INC-1 in Punta del Este, Uruguay November 2022, INC-2 in Paris, France May 2023, INC-3 in Nairobi, Kenya, in November 2023 and INC-4 in Ottawa, Canada in April 2024. INC-5 is scheduled to take place in the Republic of Korea in November 2024.

Possible Questions to Speakers:

1. Can you explain to us why plastic is such a big issue and what are some of the ways that communities in the global south are disproportionately affected by the plastic crisis?
2. What is the UN negotiating system like? Who are the negotiators, and who are the observers?
3. What are the key demands of civil society for the Global Plastic Treaty?
4. Can you talk us through some of the key takeaways from the INCs so far?
5. What efforts can organisations take if they want to support the ongoing work of civil society in the Global Plastic Treaty negotiations?
6. Where can individuals find more information about the work that BFFP and GAIA have been doing on the Global Plastic Treaty? [Add in your own organisation].
7. What is a just transition, and how can we get one for the Global Plastic Treaty?
8. What are the demands of waste pickers for a Global Plastic Treaty?
9. What are some of the false solutions we need to avoid during the negotiations?

BFFP Global Plastics Treaty Guide

Your one-stop shop for the information and resources you need to learn more about and get involved in treaty work, in whatever capacity. Check out some of the tools we have highlighted from the guide to support you in your campaign activities.

- Campaigning ideas for everyone
- How to design a campaign
- Activity ideas
  - The BFFP Treaty petition and generating your own supporter email list
  - Letter templates for writing to policy makers
  - Organisation letter template
  - Community meetings
  - Pitching journalists treaty stories
  - Social media actions
6

Unpacking Key Terminology and False Solution Concepts

**Plastics** include plastic polymers, plastic materials, plastic products and plastic wastes. Read more ([Defining Plastics](#)).

**Plastic materials** consist of plastic polymers and additives, both unintentional and intentional, including fillers ([GAIA, 2022](#)).

**Plastic pollution** is the unintended or unlawful presence of plastic in the environment, as well as toxic and climate pollution from plastics ([GAIA, 2022](#)).

**Plastic polymers** include all synthetic polymers (organic, inorganic and hybrid) as well as all semi-synthetic polymers, in their diverse states of matter, water solubility and water absorbency ([GAIA, 2022](#)).

**Plastic product**: A product or component made wholly or partly from plastic materials, including intermediate products used to manufacture other products (e.g. pellets and other primary microplastics, polystyrene beads, rolls of film) ([Directive (EU) 2019/904 on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment](#)).

**Circularity**: Circularity is reduction, repair, reuse and real recycling. We have long been cycling material resources in our economies through repair, reuse and recycling. These old practices were rebranded as "circular economy" by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and consulting firm McKinsey a decade ago. Circularity and the circular economy exclude processes that destroy materials, such as burning plastic waste, from open burn to all forms of incineration, cement kiln co-incineration and plastic-to-fuel pyrolysis. ([Plastics circularity: beyond the hype](#)).

**Circular economy**: "an approach contributing to Sustainable Consumption and Production patterns, refers to a system where products, materials and resources maintain their value and use in the economy, for as long as possible, thus minimising waste by sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing, remanufacturing and recycling, instead of throw-away or take-make-dispose." (definition from the [Amendments to the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean in the Framework of Article 15 of the Land Based Sources Protocol under the Barcelona Convention](#)). **Note**: the main indicator for the circular economy must be annual primary material production, not recycling rates.

**Lifecycle**: "Life cycle approach means considering all potential impacts of all activities and outcomes associated with the production and consumption of plastics including raw material extraction and processing (for plastics: refining; cracking; polymerisation), design and manufacturing, packaging, distribution, use and reuse, maintenance and end of life management, including segregation, collection, sorting, recycling, and disposal" ([Plastics Science](#), UNEP/PP/INC.1/7).
Recycling: “any recovery operation by which waste materials are reprocessed into products, materials or substances whether for the original or other purposes. It includes the reprocessing of organic material but does not include energy recovery and the reprocessing into materials that are to be used as fuels or for backfilling operations.” (EU Directive 2008/98 on waste, aligned with the Basel Convention Glossary of Terms).

Refill: The action of using a container that is owned by the consumer and is either refilled in the shop or refilled at home (from DUH & Zero Waste Europe 2022 Packaging Reuse vs. Packaging Prevention: Understanding which policy measures best apply).

Reuse system: A comprehensive system designed for multiple circulations of reusable packaging which remains in the ownership of the reuse system and loaned to the consumer (from University of Portsmouth Global Plastics Policy Centre 2023 Making reuse a reality: A systems approach to tackling single-use plastic pollution).

Short-lived product: A product with a use phase of less than three years.

High-risk plastic product or material: Plastic product or material with high risk of causing plastic pollution, based on its probability of the plastic to end up in the environment, and resulting impacts on the environment and human health (adapted from WWF 2023 Breaking down high-risk plastic products).

Single-use product: A product that is not conceived, designed or placed on the market to accomplish, within its life span, multiple trips or rotations by being returned to a producer for refill or reused for the same purpose for which it was conceived (adapted from EU Directive 2019/904 on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment).

Zero waste: The conservation of all resources by means of reducing production and consumption, reuse, and recycling of products, packaging, and materials without burning and with no discharges to land, water, or air that threaten the environment or human health. (adapted from Zero Waste International Alliance, 2018).

Plastics Credits, Plastic Offsetting and Plastic Neutrality: Plastic offsetting at its most basic - is one tonne of plastic collected somewhere in the world, and used to generate a credit. A company or individual then purchases that credit to offset one tonne of their plastic use. This exchange is facilitated by accreditors like Verra, marketplaces like PCX (Plastic Credit Exchange), or private companies that trade in credits or organise credit-generating activities. Plastic neutrality or ‘net-zero plastic’ is claimed when a company has purchased enough plastic credits to offset its entire plastic footprint for a set period of time. Plastic credits, plastic offsetting, and plastic neutrality are relative newcomers to the plastic-pollution-solution scene and detract from efforts to reduce plastic pollution. Read more (Smoke and Mirrors: The Realities of Plastic Credits and Offsetting) and (Plastic neutrality and credit).

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR): Extended producer responsibility (EPR) policies seek to improve the environmental and social performance of products by holding producers and brand owners accountable for the entire lifecycle of their products. According to an academic definition, EPR is: a policy principle to promote total life cycle environmental improvements of product systems by extending the responsibilities of the manufacturer of the product to various parts of the entire life cycle of the product, and especially to the take-back, recycling and final disposal of the product. Read more (GAIA 2-pager on EPR, The Pros and Cons of EPR).