

WRAP-UP REPORT

INC-5

**A TURNING POINT IN THE FIGHT FOR AN
AMBITIOUS PLASTICS TREATY**



#LESSPLASTICMORELIFE

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For more information on GAIA's advocacy around the plastics treaty, please visit no-burn.org/unea-plastics-treaty

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INC-5: A Turning Point in the Fight for an Ambitious Plastics Treaty



The tides turned at INC-5, and the way forward to an ambitious plastics treaty is now clearer than it's ever been.

At previous INCs, the majority of Member States showed willingness to compromise in the spirit of good-faith negotiations, even as petro-states used multiple tactics to delay and dilute progress towards a meaningful treaty. This time, they fought back.

Global South regions such as Africa, GRULAC and the Pacific Island nations led the charge, releasing multiple text proposals calling for plastic production reduction; 103 countries signed in support of a Declaration on Primary Plastic Polymers. Panama, the Philippines, Ghana and other countries directly confronted the tactics of petrochemical-producing countries calling themselves the “like-minded group,” which made up the obstructionist front.

In the “stocktake” plenary on November 27, Panama’s Juan Carlos Monterrey gave a forceful intervention:

“For our colleagues that argue that production is not part of the mandate, let me correct the record. Production is part of the full lifecycle of plastic... Every time that we hesitate in these negotiations, every time that we soften our ambition, more plastic seeps into earth, and into us...”

The drumbeat for plastic production cuts, the elimination of harmful chemicals, and inclusion of human rights reached a crescendo on the final morning of INC-5 at a fiery press conference with Rwanda, France, the European Union, Mexico, Panama, and Fiji, where they reiterated their commitment to fight for an ambitious treaty. The group went as far as to suggest that if petro-states refused to come to the table in good faith, a “coalition of the willing” would continue without them, and that no treaty is better than a weak treaty.

The significance of this message cannot be overstated– in the world of international diplomacy where negotiators are timid about explicitly confronting bad-faith actors, these countries are demonstrating their willingness to take extraordinary steps to prevent a few countries from spoiling the world’s chance to end plastic pollution.

This sea-change came in spite of all odds:

an INC-Chair releasing unbalanced text proposals formulated through unclear processes, and the Chair and Secretariat keeping civil society locked out of the negotiation rooms. Despite these bad-faith actions and lack of procedural transparency, civil society involvement could not be stopped. Throughout the talks we reinforced our support to the ambitious negotiators, reiterating that we would stand with them if they stood firm on ambition, and that we would hold countries accountable if they did not.

Over 100 countries

support plastic production reduction targets

Throughout the INCs, GAIA members have continually provided ground-truthed evidence of the impacts of plastic pollution, data, and scientific information to negotiators to ensure they have what they need for informed decision-making. INC-5 made clear that attempts to shut civil society out will not work– our commitment doesn't fade, even if a door is closed in our faces.

Ambitious Member State interventions at the closing plenary were a show of force. Juliet Kabera of Rwanda read a statement on behalf of over 85 countries emphasizing their shared commitment to a legally binding treaty enshrining reduction targets, phase-out of harmful chemicals, a just transition, and an equitable financial mechanism. She then urged everyone in the room who supported an ambitious treaty to stand up, and

90% of the people present leap to their feet and applaud, exposing how small the opposition is under the strength and determination of the majority.

This was further underlined by an intervention from Camila Zepeda of Mexico, who read out the list of 94 countries that demand strong action on chemicals of concern. The list of countries went on and on– for nearly two minutes– and the murmurs of support from around the room built to thunderous cheers and applause when she finished.





That closing plenary could have gone a very different way— the majority of Member States could have chosen speed over strength, and given in to the will of a minority of countries for the sake of getting the treaty done on the scheduled timeline. That treaty would have done very little to end plastic pollution, and may have even created more harm. Instead, in that moment of the closing plenary when the room jumped to their feet,

it was clear that ambition had won:

ambition won the narrative,
the political dynamics, the
numbers, the alliances.

The like-minded group was unmasked as a small force out to deliberately sabotage the negotiations, and were politically marginalized.

Going into INC-5.2, plastic production reduction targets are still on the table, and this time a large and vocal majority of countries are ready to go to the mat for their inclusion in the final text. For the first time since the negotiations for a legally binding treaty to end plastic pollution started, we see a clear pathway to an ambitious treaty. Now it is time to ensure that those countries who stood up for ambition in Busan solidify that intention in ink, so that we come out of negotiations with a treaty text that reflects the will of the majority.

The like-minded group may have walked away from INC-5 having lost significant ground, but they will come back swinging at 5.2.

The plastics treaty is currently our best shot to address the climate crisis and fight the fossil fuel industry in a parallel process to the long and difficult climate negotiations. However, this can only happen if civil society keeps up the pressure. Without the eyes of the world on negotiators, we risk losing everything we gained at INC-5.

GAIA stands ready to continue the fight for the strong plastics treaty that the world demands!



The bigger picture

Whatever the outcome of the plastics treaty negotiations, the process itself has supercharged GAIA members' and the #breakfreefromplastic movement's impact, both inside and outside of the INCs. Civil society groups have increased their capacity to advocate for progressive policies in their regions by working with their national governments and regional negotiating blocs.

Those new doors between governments and environmental justice groups will remain open after the plastics treaty negotiations have come to a close.

The INCs have also provided an important space for movement leaders across the globe to convene, opening avenues for collaboration that had not previously existed, resulting in a much more connected and strengthened global movement. By continuously working together on the plastics treaty negotiations over the last few years, groups have built alignment and trust, and a shared understanding of the commonalities between their struggles and solutions.

The treaty space is also currently our most concrete and tangible opportunity to address the climate crisis and fight the fossil fuel lobby on another front, particularly as after 30 years, climate talks still fall short of curtailing the industry.



What's next?



INC-5 was a major success and showed the power of ambition, commitment and collaboration;

it was a clear turning point in the trajectory of the negotiations. Yet, in order to have the treaty text reflect the ambition stated inside and outside of the room, more negotiation time is needed. INC-5.2 is an agreed extension of the negotiations' timeline, as frequently happens in multilateral agreements.

The elephant in the room is the fear that extended negotiation time will not necessarily result in a stronger treaty text unless the rules governing decision-making allow the majority to go beyond the lowest common denominator. As stated by the delegate from Senegal at INC-2, "consensus kills democracy" as it, in practice, allows as few as one bad-faith actor to prevent all other Member States from making decisions backed by independent science. Member States must adopt rules of procedure that include the possibility of voting as a solution to the outdated political commitment to consensus-based decision-making.

There is also a possibility that INC 5.2 won't be sufficient to detail the needed provisions, such as production, chemicals of concern and the financial mechanism, given the little time spent on textual negotiations in previous INCs- textual negotiations only started in practice at INC-4. If negotiations at INC 5.2 make meaningful progress but Member States need more time to craft the necessary details, we must support an extension of the process. Although the plastic crisis is urgent and we all want to avoid never-ending INCs, a strict timeline should not come at the cost of an effective treaty.

After the INCs end and the treaty is signed at the Diplomatic Conference, it will be time for the ratification process, in which countries must go through their domestic procedures to adopt the agreed upon instrument - a phase in which national and regional advocacy will continue to play a very significant role. Once we reach the number of countries needed for the treaty to come into force, we will enter the Plastic Conferences of the Parties (COPs) where the State parties will negotiate provisions' granularity, and monitor implementation through consistent reporting.

Although the process is long and sometimes tedious, multilateral negotiations remain the main avenue for a wider policy environment needed to address plastic pollution.



source: IISD/Kiara Worth

INC-5 GAIA Deep-Dives



For more in-depth analysis on each day of the negotiations at INC-5, please read the recaps that we published at the close of each day of INC-5. If you would like to receive these recaps to your inbox for the next INC, please sign up [here](#).

- [November 25 \(ES\)](#)
- [November 26 \(ES\)](#)
- [November 27 \(ES\)](#)
- [November 28 \(ES\)](#)
- [November 29 \(ES\)](#)
- [November 30 \(ES\)](#)
- December 1 [closing press release \(ES\)](#)

For regional updates and other footage, see our [youtube playlist](#), and [GAIA Africa's podcast](#).

Looking Back: Progress from Previous Treaty Negotiations

UNEA 5.2

Member States approved a resolution to develop a legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution, covering the entire plastics life cycle. This was the foundation of an ambitious treaty, and reflected years of civil society advocacy around the world.



screengrab from video of John Chweya, Kenya Wastepickers' Association

INC-1

Negotiation time was wasted over unresolved procedural matters and a "Multi-Stakeholder Forum" that created a parallel conversation to the important topics that needed discussion. Despite these setbacks, waste pickers triumphed with the announcement of the formation of the formal Group, Friends of Waste Pickers. This was a historic moment: never before had countries formally committed to advocate on behalf of waste pickers in the context of international negotiations.

INC-2

Right at the outset of this INC, negotiators hit a snag: the Rules of Procedure. The minority of countries seeking to delay and derail plastics treaty negotiations weaponized what would normally be an innocuous procedural matter by insisting that there be no allowance for voting if an agreement cannot be reached by consensus, instead arguing for consensus at all costs – even if it means that one country can hold negotiations hostage. Precious negotiation time was used on this issue, resulting in a disastrous “provisional” ruling that the debate could be reopened if voting was ever evoked.



INC-4

At INC-4, over 50 countries expressed support for plastic reduction targets, a decisive shift in momentum from previous INC's. Rwanda and Peru were the first to call for a plastic reduction target of 40% by 2040 – still insufficient to address the plastic crisis but a good start. Countries were also able to negotiate treaty text for the first time, whittling the unwieldy Zero Draft into a viable precursor to a final treaty text. In this streamlined draft, GAIA's key policy priorities were very much in play: reduction of primary plastic polymers, eradication of toxic chemicals in products, a dedicated financial mechanism, and enshrining a just transition. [Read our closing press release.](#)



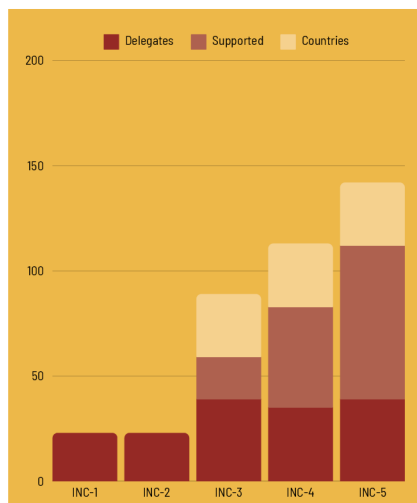
INC-3

At this INC, many countries stood up for a high-ambition treaty focused on human rights and plastic production cuts, particularly nations within the African bloc, Pacific Small Island Developing States, and Latin America. However, poor facilitation resulted in the Zero Draft text—which was meant to form the basis of the negotiations—more than tripling in size, as a “like-minded group” of countries (primarily petro-states) added language options meant to water down ambition and call core agreements from the mandate into question. Despite this, advocates remained hopeful as Global South countries became more vocal in their demands for a just plastics treaty. INC-3 was the first moment in the negotiations in which ambitious countries posited that “no deal is better than a bad deal,” and did not allow a shallow mandate for intersessional work to pass, giving us the glimpse of hope for future negotiations. [Read our closing press release.](#)



Member Engagement

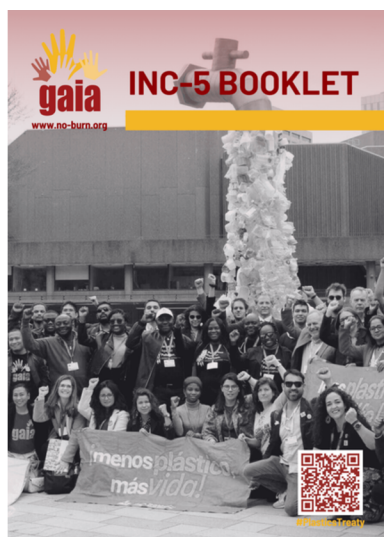




Throughout the INCs the

GAIA delegation

grew from 23 to 39 from 30 countries, supporting coordination for an additional 70+ members.



- GAIA staff provided logistical support and strategy development coordination leading up to INC-5, and provided members and negotiators with booklets in English, French, and Spanish, communications toolkits, and region-specific resources to support their advocacy efforts, such as the Life Before Plastic Case Study [English & French], GAIA Africa Community Sensitisation Guidebook, and the GAIA Africa Messaging Guide on Plastics & Healthcare
- Over 80 people were present at GAIA's pre-INC-5 strategy meeting, where participants were briefed on the state of play going into negotiations, and were given space to share information and insights

- An average of 50 people joined GAIA's daily breakfast meetings to coordinate strategies around the negotiations

GAIA found hotel accommodations

5-min walk

from the INC venue

for 45

members

Media Impact



Shaping the Narrative

GAIA Media Coverage

↑ **Over 220**

mentions between Nov. 1 - Dec. 17

↑ **2.22 billion**

potential reach

↑ **\$20.6 million**

advertising equivalent



Quoted in top-tier outlets like The Financial Times, Deutsche-Weille, Al Jazeera, China Daily, ABC news, CNN, Associated Press, and Reuters. (See here for a full list of media hits.)



GAIA members interviewed in such outlets as Reuters, The Vibes, Climatica Coop, Pressenza, and Packaging Insights, among others.

News Highlights

- Partnered with economist Mateo Cordier for an op-ed in [The Conversation](#) France and Europe, creating greater visibility for his latest research showing the cost of failing to reduce plastic production.



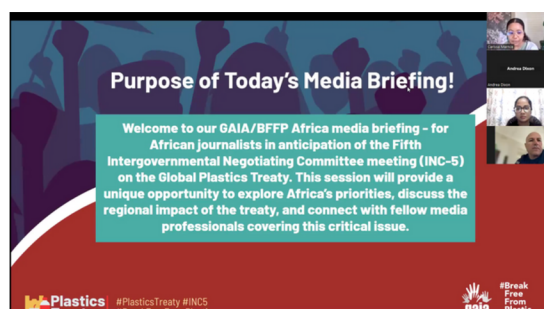
- Multiple interviews in high-profile outlets in Latin America and the Caribbean, including [CNN en español](#) and [DW en español](#).



- Saturation in Asia Pacific outlets such as an op-ed in [The Diplomat](#), and mentions in [The Korea Herald](#), [The New Delhi Times](#), [The Hindu](#), and an interview in [Naver TV](#).



- African Journalist Network Treaty Briefing Session with over 50 participants [[EN](#), [FR](#)]



Joint Global South Press Briefing

GAIA held a press briefing on the last day of INC with a [rapid-response comment](#) on the chair's latest non paper.

- the press conference also gave a platform for delegates from Ghana and Senegal to give their interpretation of the state of negotiations as speakers on GAIA's panel
- the event was attended by 47 journalists online including *The New York Times* and *Politico*, and a full house in the media room in-person, including *Associated Press*, *Agence France-Presse*, *Reuters*, *Bloomberg*, among others
- media pick-up from such top-tier outlets as *Associated Press* (which featured our press conference on their youtube channel), *Newsweek*, *Agence France- Presse*, and *RFI*, and a picture of the press conference featured heavily as stock photo in wider media coverage



Social Media Impact

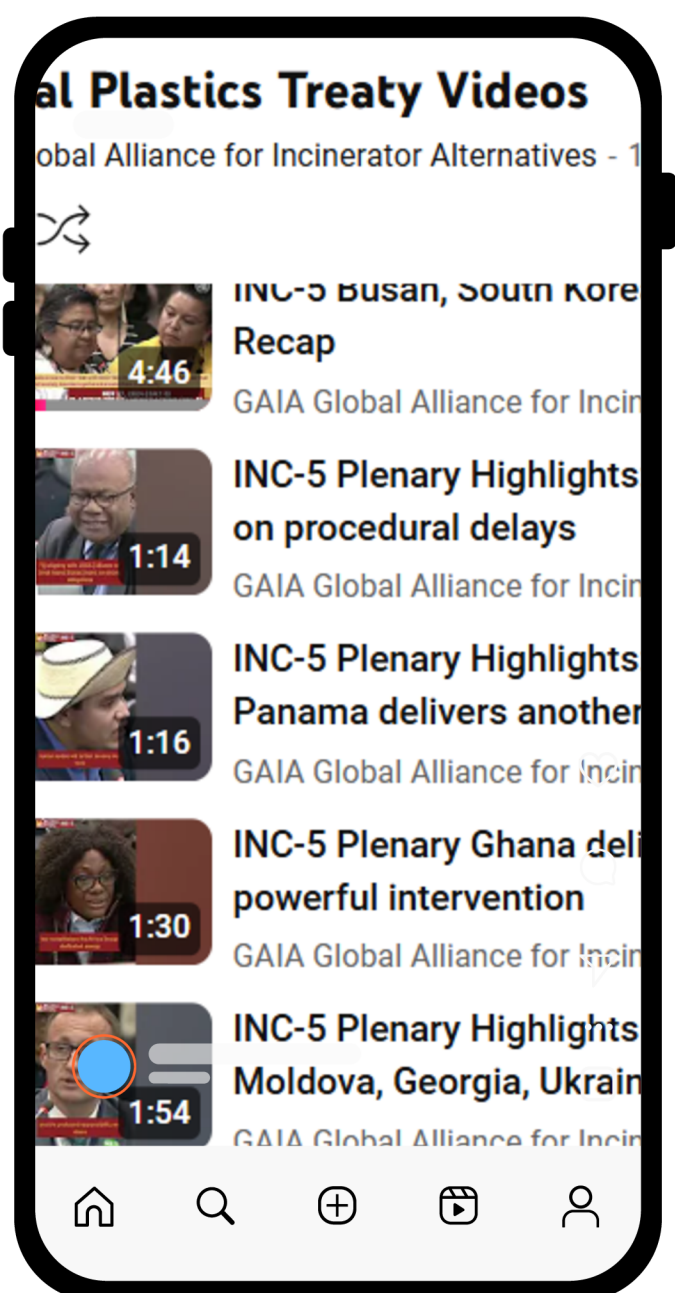


We have built a reputation as one of the **leading NGO voices on social media** - from UNEP Africa to national delegates to News Bulletins - GAIA's global accounts were getting tagged on INC-5 posts.



Amplifying members & champions

#LessPlasticMoreLife



#PlasticsTreaty

with mention of GAIA or our hashtag and messaging



6.9M*

reach



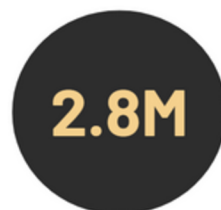
50K+

engagement

**Actual figures would most likely be bigger since Meltwater couldn't track IG, LI, & BlueSky.*

GAIA Accounts

without figures from BlueSky and LAC accounts



IMPRESSIONS



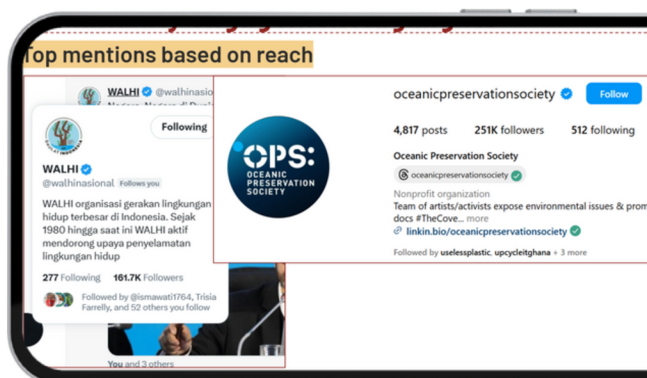
ENGAGEMENT

Highlights



Target Engagement

retweeted, reposted, and tagged by country delegates, academe, UNEP, and journalists



Movement-Building

with Indigenous Peoples, Just Transition, Environmental Justice Groups, Korean CSOs, plastics treaty coalition

Highlights

Early Adaptor
of emerging spaces like BlueSky and LinkedIn Live;
influencer engagement



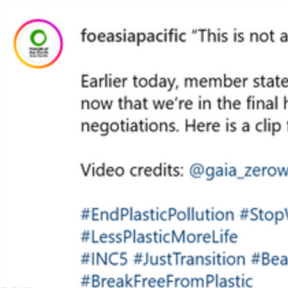
Go-to Source

real-time info insider for those not on-the-ground as well as videos and assets provider for the GAIA members, allies, and bigger movement.

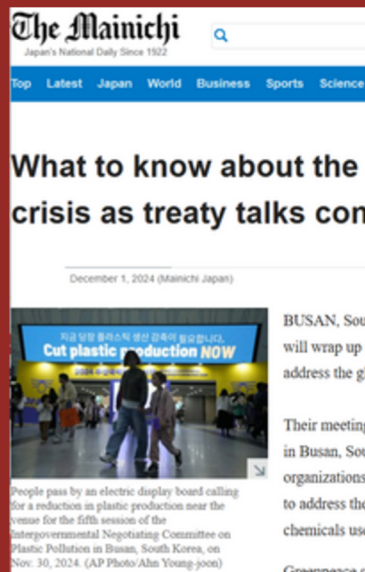
Rob Ralston @policyrelevant.bsky.social · 22d
update on the status of global plastic treaty negotiations from one of the key environmental NGOs engaged in the process #plasticstreaty



Max Liboiron @maxliboiron.bsky.social · 21d
My top NGOs to read, cite & follow on plastics research & advocacy (including plastic links to climate change & broader toxicants) are @gaiazerowaste.bsky.social, @toxicsfree.bsky.social, & @cielorg.bsky.social all around.



Billboard Advertising Impact



We had a billboard video display the week of INC-5 in BEXCO itself (the negotiations space) as well as the Centum City subway station nearest the venue. It got over 6,600 impressions as well as high visibility in earned media- AP took a picture of it, which was featured in their story as well as reprints in many other outlets.

GAIA

GAIA is a network of grassroots groups as well as national and regional alliances representing more than 1000 organizations from 92 countries.

We envision a just, zero waste world built on respect for ecological limits and community rights, where people are free from the burden of toxic and plastic pollution, and resources are sustainably conserved, not burned or dumped.



www.no-burn.org

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