

A Global Treaty to End Plastic Pollution



Strengthening the zero-draft text for biodiversity and local communities

We call upon the parties of the International Negotiating Committee (INC) to develop and adopt an ambitious international legally binding instrument (the treaty) that is driven by and representative of the needs of local actors and effectively protects biodiversity.

As we move from zero draft to first draft, negotiators must ensure that the treaty text is strengthened, and implementation mechanisms designed, to deliver in the following areas. Further detail and text recommendations available upon request.

Biodiversity must not be considered an afterthought

- **Address biodiversity impacts** - The treaty and the approach to implementation must recognise that plastic pollution of all scales (macro- and micro- plastics) is a major driver within the triple planetary crisis – catalysing biodiversity loss, Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions and pollution. Therefore, a full lifecycle approach to tackling both the physical and chemical impacts of plastic pollution, with scientifically informed measures, should be core to the treaty if it is going to address the critical role of plastics in driving global biodiversity loss.
- **Reduction in production** - The treaty must recognise that a reduction in plastic production is central to decreasing associated pollution in the natural environment and, consequently, its impacts on human and ecosystem health. As such, there must be a focus on rapidly reducing production in addition to end-of-life solutions. All plastic materials, whether derived from fossil fuels, recycled plastic, or biomass and organic feedstocks, must be in scope.
- **Biodiversity positive language** - Specific language must be integrated into the treaty text on safeguarding, protecting and restoring biodiversity impacted by plastic pollution. This should include explicit reference to all aquatic and terrestrial environments, including marine and freshwater.

Local communities matter

- **Equitable development and implementation** - Diverse contexts hold their own unique challenges, which must be considered when designing locally appropriate solutions. Collaboration between developed and developing countries, specifically the communities disproportionately affected by plastic pollution, is crucial to ensure commitments are responding to impacts on local communities. It is imperative that the negotiation process creates space and means for negotiators to connect with, hear from and respond to the needs of these communities during the negotiations to ensure that the core obligations and the implementation mechanisms are fit for purpose in different socio-economic contexts.
- **Properly resourced, locally appropriate solutions** - Bans in plastic use and methods of disposal must always be accompanied by funding and/or equitable and locally appropriate solutions. Support for implementation of the treaty must penetrate beyond the national level, with focus also needed on local and grassroots action, especially in isolated communities where there are limited economies of scale and/or suitable infrastructure.
- **Capacity sharing and building** - Innovation and capacity building must be fostered within developing countries. There is much to be learnt from communities who have developed pragmatic, locally appropriate and impactful solutions to the challenges that they are faced with. These solutions have the support to foster positive, long-term behaviour change and the treaty must ensure they are made accessible for global replication.

Science-based solutions

- **Creation of an integrated science/technical advisory body** - There is an urgent need for the creation of an expert science-body so that the treaty receives evidence-based support that is free from conflict of interest and to safeguard against 'false solutions' and negative biodiversity impacts, for example, around legacy plastic pollution removal. Advising and guiding the development and implementation of the treaty, this body should be independent, globally-representative, and multi-disciplinary, and incorporate both academic research and local and traditional knowledge.
- **Tackle microplastic at all stages** - Microplastic pollution is a pervasive, persistent form of pollution that severely jeopardises the health of people and planet, and it results from more than just intentional additions to cosmetic products and unintentional losses of plastic pellets. Because solutions to microplastic pollution must be holistic - focused on conditions at source, integrated and applied across the whole life cycle of plastic and plastic products - it should be addressed by all control measures and in each part of the treaty.
- **Scientific definitions** - Treaty language must include clear definitions of key terms as soon as possible to foster clarity in the negotiations. Given geographical and cultural variations in plastic usage, terms like 'avoidable' and 'problematic' cannot be left undefined, and definitions should focus on evidence-led impacts. Microplastics must be clearly defined as having a 5mm maximum with no lower limit (i.e., including nanoplastics) across all polymers and all feedstocks.

Accountability

- **Clear goals, dates and compliance** - To ensure the treaty is effective, globally agreed national targets are needed rather than nationally determined voluntary targets. There must be an emphasis on accelerated implementation in developed countries, and tailored support provided to developing nations. Targets must be time-bound and have clear legal compliance measures. Implementation of the treaty must be monitored via a scientifically informed, robust monitoring framework, with globally standardised indicators, alongside transparent mechanisms to identify non-compliance.
- **Dedicated and appropriately resourced funding mechanism** - The treaty must include an equitable funding mechanism to enable implementation of the core obligations and a robust monitoring and evaluation system. Such a fund should include dedicated finance for co-developing locally appropriate solutions, addressing underlying barriers to change within local contexts.
- **Disclosure, transparency and responsibility** - Transparency must be ensured along supply chains, starting with, but not limited to, disclosure obligations on producers. This means embracing a 'no data, no market' model, alongside the obligation of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and the Polluter Pays Principle. Sources of transboundary plastic pollution accumulating on SIDS and LEDCs must be identifiable so source countries can be held accountable.

To ensure the treaty is truly driven by the needs of those on the frontline of plastic pollution, we must engage global communities and surface their experiences, unique challenges, and requirements for an effective treaty. These messages are guided by diverse collaborators and informed by a series of consultations which the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and Fauna & Flora conducted with representatives from: Antigua, Ascension Island, Cameroon, Georgia, India, Kenya, Mongolia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Sao Tome & Principe, St Helena, St Lucia, Turkey and the UK.

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