

INC-1 Plastic Pollution Treaty

First Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) for the development of an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution,

including in the marine environment

Punta del Este (Uruguay)

[Multi-Stakeholder Forum](#) 26.11.2022; [INC-1](#) 28.11.-2.12.2022

The first meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee established by the United Nations Environmental Assembly (UNEA) with [UNEA resolution 5/14](#) to “End plastic pollution: Towards an international legally binding instrument” is taking place amidst a context of growing economic, food, and energy insecurity. At the same time, numerous international environmental treaties and those relating to trade, including within the World Trade Organisation (WTO), are addressing elements of plastic pollution.

There is overwhelming evidence that conservation works and is an effective and essential contributor towards many of humanity’s goals, including towards a circular economy and a systemic shift to sustainable trade on plastics. The INC-1 provides a unique opportunity for the global community and IUCN to reinforce plastic pollution governance at the interface of human rights, environment, trade rules, and sustainable development.

For this first INC, IUCN highlights the following:

- ✓ Guided by IUCN Resolutions adopted by IUCN Members in 2021¹, IUCN strongly welcomes the ongoing process for a global Plastics Treaty and supports the partnerships in place in order to eliminate and remediate plastic pollution and enhance circular plastic management at local, regional, and global levels.
- ✓ IUCN urges Parties to adopt clear, preferably numerical and verifiable objectives in order to take priority action by 2025 to prevent further plastic pollution from single-use plastic products in protected areas and in the land, water and marine environment.
- ✓ IUCN strongly encourages Parties to start negotiations with the ultimate goal of stopping plastic pollution worldwide by 2030 (Zero Pollution) in sight, while considering national and local circumstances and capabilities for implementation along the whole plastics value chain.
- ✓ IUCN calls for inclusiveness in the process and an effective treaty as an outcome. The Treaty must address the full life-cycle, embrace bold, new, science-based tools, cover a broad scope of environmental resources (land, water, ocean) and create a set of policy measures and means of implementation to upscale and redirect finance, incentives, and trade. Strong stakeholder involvement in the upcoming negotiations and in implementation is therefore key.
- ✓ IUCN stands ready to support this process. The Union is well equipped to play a leading role in shaping critical coalitions, bring scientific knowledge and technical expertise to contribute throughout the INC process. IUCN also offers the tools to guide, monitor, and measure action including [the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions](#).

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¹ [019](#) - Stopping the global plastic pollution crisis in marine environments by 2030; and [069](#) - Eliminate plastic pollution in protected areas, with priority action on single-use plastic products.

Background

The science and evidence on which IUCN's work is based shows that many of the planetary systems that regulate climate and support life on Earth are suffering major impacts from human activities. Plastic pollution is one of the most important consequences of ineffective economic models and poor waste management systems.

At this time, we must urgently engage with the negotiations for a global Plastics Treaty given the dire state of loss of ecosystem services (marine, water, and land) due to plastic pollution, and to promote the potential of circular economy models at the beginning of these negotiations.

Transformational change to humanity's current way of living is not only vital, but also of economic interest, requiring decisive local and global action from **all countries and all sectors along the plastic value chain and across society**. Most of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are affected by plastic pollution in some manner. All SDGs, especially in Low- or Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) or in Small Island Developing States (SIDS), cannot be achieved if plastic pollution is not addressed.

IUCN has played a key role globally in helping raise awareness on, but also identify and provide tools to assess the impacts and sources of plastic pollution. This is in line with IUCN's mission: to *influence, encourage and assist societies to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable*.

IUCN's asks

Two IUCN Resolutions from the IUCN World Conservation Congress adopted in 2021² request strong action. Based on the work done so far ([IUCN.org](https://www.iucn.org)), IUCN is supporting and calling for:

- ✓ **An ambitious, effective, equitable and ecologically sustainable, inclusive, gender responsive content of the Plastic Treaty, with clear, preferably numerical and verifiable objectives to prevent further plastic pollution from single-use plastic products everywhere, including in protected areas and in the marine environment, by 2025 and ultimately Zero Pollution by 2030.**

- ✓ **A set of effective and equitable policy measures** (Agenda Multi-Stakeholder Forum; Agenda Item 4 INC-1, § 3 & 4 of UNEA-Mandate).
- ✓ **An effective Treaty must embrace bold new and effective solutions, means of implementation and monitoring and compliance provisions. It should cover a broad scope - land, water, ocean- and must aim to upscale and redirect finance, incentives, and trade.**
- ✓ **Strong and inclusive stakeholder participation during the process and implementation as well as science-based targets for an equitable, successful outcome** (Agenda Multi-Stakeholder Forum; Agenda item 3 & 4 INC-1; § 9 & 11 UNEA Mandate). It is clear that navigating the complex INC-mandate will require strong, science-based engagement from stakeholders positioned "across the value chain" of plastics production, manufacturing, use, recycling, and disposal and at all levels -sub-national, national, regional, and global levels. Observers should have regular and ample opportunities to contribute their expertise throughout the process.
- ✓ A plastics treaty that **addresses impacts across a full lifecycle approach while considering national and local circumstances and capabilities for implementation along the whole value chain.**

In IUCN's view, circularity of plastic products and waste can only be achieved by clear, numerical, and verifiable objectives and a set of effective and equitable policy measures as mentioned above. But importantly, a new plastics treaty must **rely on science, and traditional knowledge - knowledge of indigenous peoples and local knowledge systems - and learn from and be compliant with other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs)**. It is important to note that there is an increasing convergence among the environment, conservation and human rights communities as well as with the environmental crime and corruption communities in relation to plastic pollution.

pollution in protected areas, with priority action on single-use plastic products.

² [019](#) - Stopping the global plastic pollution crisis in marine environments by 2030; [069](#) - Eliminate plastic

IUCN's support

At IUCN's heart is respect for nature and respect for people ([Nature 2030 | IUCN](#)). **IUCN's foundational science-based technical, legal, and economic expertise and evidence** is particularly well placed to connect the biosphere elements of the SDGs with a commitment to work towards more just and equitable societies and circular economies. In doing so, IUCN aims to build trust and consensus among different stakeholder groups, identify feasible policy options and, critically, foster a culture of delivery and action that accelerates early and sustainable implementation.

IUCN supports the aim of a circular economy in the context of plastic pollution by offering the tools to guide, monitor and measure such action such as the [IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™](#), [Red List of Ecosystems](#), [World Database of Key Biodiversity Areas](#), and [Protected Planet - the World Database on Protected Areas](#) and [the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions](#) amongst others.

Methodologies to identify, measure and address water, land, and marine plastic pollution sources and plastic leakage along the whole value chain and across sectors, but also tools to identify investments, alternative technologies and circular business opportunities are available from IUCN.

IUCN, through ongoing projects ([IUCN.org](#)), will strengthen support to governments, research institutions, and industries to work collaboratively to understand the economic impact of plastic pollution, to promote business plans that promote alternative value chains for the redesign of plastic products, rethink their use and disposal, and provide policymakers, manufacturers, and consumers with the evidence needed to implement technological, behavioural, and policy solutions to address plastic pollution at the nexus of environment and trade.

IUCN could eventually also support dedicated work programmes for major sectors in which plastics are produced and used (e. g. fisheries, tourism, waste management), support the development of locally-led national action plans, or eventually pilot projects for special products (e. g. fishing gear).

Considering the fact that production methods, products, substitutes, alternatives, and technical solutions vary depending on the countries, industries, markets, contexts, and applications in

which they are produced and used, IUCN will bring in the legal expertise, namely through its World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL), in order to design a Plastics Treaty that combines human rights, environmental and trade rules and sustainable development to enhance circular plastic management at local, regional, and global levels.

The Union's engagement will focus on strengthening the legal foundations of the conservation of nature and sustainable development elements, including the human right to a healthy environment and the precautionary principle. It will incorporate the learnings gained through engagement in similar fora on Biodiversity, Climate, Oceans and Chemicals and Waste and promote synergies.

IUCN will build on existing cooperation with other relevant actors and strengthen it, scale up local and regional initiatives, and promote circular economic models to develop synergies and coherence in relation to engaging IUCN and its Members in the dialogues on the Global Plastics Treaty.

Lately, an increasing number of businesses recognise broader environmental concerns and the risks and opportunities associated with their impacts and dependencies on biodiversity and natural capital; as a result, many have committed to integrate biodiversity and natural capital into their decision-making processes and operations.

With similar endeavor businesses are now incorporating plastic-related issues. IUCN is supporting them achieve this in a scientifically robust manner through translating data, knowledge and standards, into practical action plans for transformation.

IUCN is in the process of developing the first of its kind *Nature-Positive Approach*, which will provide a framework for stakeholders including private sector, to assess their positive and negative impacts on species, ecosystems and human well-being, to achieve net positive results.

Finally, IUCN is also working towards accelerating the translation of commitments into implementation through new forms of collaboration that integrate nature's value into the logic of finance. We want more investment – also in remediation or infrastructure for waste management – that is bringing value to natural capital.