INC-2 Plastic Pollution Treaty

Second session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the development of an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment (INC-2). 29 May – 2 June 2023, Paris, France

Key messages

- The INC-2 is taking place as plastics waste and chemical pollution are contributing to the triple planetary crisis relating to biodiversity, climate, and pollution.
- Transformational change to humanity’s current way of living – from linear to circular - is not only vital, but also of economic interest.
- A circular plastics economy has important potential benefits for nature but needs to be integrated more closely with biodiversity policies and strategies.
- A just transition requires decisive local and global action from all countries and all sectors along the plastic value chain and across society.
- IUCN calls on Parties at INC-2 to request the elaboration of a zero-draft of the Treaty for discussion at the 3rd session of the INC in November 2023.

As part of the triple planetary crisis, pollution is one of the major drivers of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation, and plastic pollution is detrimental to our terrestrial, freshwater and marine biodiversity and ecosystems, upon which livelihoods and economies depend. A healthy environment is not only the basis of humanity’s means of support, welfare and economies, but it is also a human right. Most of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are affected by plastic pollution in some manner. The 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.

There are increasing requests for action to tackle plastic pollution as evidenced in IUCN Resolutions (7.019 - Stopping the global plastic pollution crisis in marine environments by 2030 and 7.069 - Eliminate plastic pollution in protected areas, with priority action on single-use plastic products) or through international biodiversity goals and targets (Target 7 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)), the SDGs (in particular SDG12 and associated targets), and the recently agreed High Seas Treaty.

Also, various parallel processes and activities under the broader pollution agenda address plastic pollution, such as:
- UNEA resolution UNEP/EA.5/Res. 8 to establish a Science-Policy Panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution;
- Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions on Chemicals and Waste (BRS MEAs) and other multilateral environmental agreements such as the Minamata Convention on Mercury; and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) – Process;
- UN General Assembly “Zero Waste Initiative”;
- WTO engagement to address trade and plastics regulation issues, including through the WTO Dialogue on Plastics Pollution and Environmentally Sustainable Plastics Trade.

As a major threat to biodiversity, welfare and human health, transformational change to our plastics production and consumption patterns – from a linear to a circular...
IUCN recommendations to INC-2

Based on its extensive work on plastics, and in line with IUCN's Position Paper for INC-1 and its submission to INC-2, IUCN calls on Parties to:

✔ Agree to measurable, ecologically sustainable objectives, targets and actions to stop all plastic pollution by 2030 and end pollution from single-use plastics by 2025. It is essential to ensure consistency across commitments made at various international fora and coherence across all these processes, including at the national level. Reducing plastic production and eliminating products and chemicals of concern will be key to achieving this outcome.

✔ Ensure an inclusive, just and gender responsive process and an effective Treaty as an outcome. The Plastics Treaty must be carried out with the full and effective participation of Indigenous peoples and local communities. Likewise, women and girls, whose equality is a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable development, must be empowered and included to achieve our environmental, social, and economic goals of a just transition and a circular economy.

✔ Negotiate an ambitious Treaty. The Treaty must be bold, embrace science-based tools and a wide range of environmental resources, upscale and redirect finance, incentives, and trade, and consider national and local contexts (municipalities, cities, informal sector, including Waste pickers, and SMEs) and capacities for implementation. Particularly, the Treaty should address priorities relating to ending plastic pollution along the proposed substantive obligations, following the waste hierarchy and the full life-cycle (up-stream, mid-stream, down-stream).

✔ Mandate the INC-Secretariat to elaborate a zero draft of the Treaty for discussion at the INC-3 in November 2023.

IUCN resources to support action against plastic pollution

IUCN supports the INC and the process of developing a new plastics Treaty by shaping critical coalitions, bridging scientific knowledge and legal, economic, and technical expertise.

In preparation for INC-2, together with many partner organizations, IUCN has been working to support
national delegates with the best science and law viewpoints.

IUCN also offers tools to guide, monitor, and measure action against plastic pollution, including the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™, the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions, the Species Threat Abatement and Recovery (STAR) metric, alongside emerging work on a nature positive approach and our well-advanced work on gender mainstreaming across MEAs.

The following actions and products are worth highlighting:

- Co-developed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and IUCN, the National Guidance on Plastic Pollution Hotspotting and Shaping Action contributes to filling gaps in knowledge. It provides a methodological framework and practical tools applicable at national level.

- The Blueprint to zero plastic waste, developed by IUCN, with Searious Business is a complete Do-It-Yourself guide to reducing plastic waste on any island anywhere in the world;

- The projects Plastic Waste Free Islands (PWFI) in the Caribbean and Pacific, and the Plastic Free Islands in the Mediterranean are exploring key human rights issues in the tourism, fisheries, and waste management sectors;

- IUCN with GRID-Arendal partner in a new project: "AFRIPAC: Effective plastic treaty capacity building: Africa and African SIDS". This project aims to empower five African nations’ negotiating skills for a strong Global Treaty on plastic pollution;

- A series of six legal briefs developed by IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL), on key elements for the Treaty, a glossary of terms, the structure of the Treaty, a just transition, treaty regime interaction, and circular economy and plastic life-cycle issues.

- A new “Policy brief on treaty negotiations”, by WCEL outlining the key elements and steps in the legal process of treaty negotiations

- IUCN, WCEL and CIET jointly developed a brief on “WTO Rules and Key Elements for Consideration in the Context of a Treaty to End Plastic Pollution”, outlining that trade policies be designed inclusively to foster non-discrimination and assistance to developing countries to allow them to tackle plastic pollution in a way that meets their obligations both under trade law and MEAs, while advancing on the SDGs.

- A recently published IUCN report makes clear that in order to fulfil its promise, circular economy must take biodiversity into account. The report acknowledges the strong potential of the circular economy to achieve the international community’s environmental targets. It also points out that some theories or practices associated with the circular economy concept today need to be carefully reconsidered to ensure they do not pose a risk to biodiversity. For instance, a growing demand for bio-based materials to replace plastics can result in increased land use pressures and habitat losses.

IUCN is committed and will continue to support the advancement of this important process through its tools and knowledge products as well as through partnerships with relevant actors and stakeholders.

For more information, please contact:

Karine Siegwart, Dr.
Senior Policy Advisor - International Policy Centre
Karine.siegwart@iucn.org

IUCN World Headquarters
Rue Mauverney 28
1196 Gland
Switzerland
Tel: +41 22 999 0000
www.iucn.org