

First Session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an internationally legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment

Opening Plenary – Statement by Australia

Thank you Chair, and may I congratulate you on your appointment.

I also wish to extend my sincere thanks to the Government of Uruguay and the community of Punta del Este, for so graciously hosting this negotiating session.

Excellencies and fellow delegates – Australia welcomes the opportunity to work with you all this week as we take the first steps together to develop a new international binding agreement to end plastic pollution.

We welcome the broad cross section of stakeholders represented in the multi-stakeholder dialogue – including business, scientists, civil society, non-government organisations and the informal sector. Australia also recognises the continuing connection to land and culture of First Nations peoples across the world, and the importance of their participation and contributions to this process.

We all have a vested interest in a safe circular economy and the end of plastic pollution.

Plastic's unique characteristics have been revolutionary in our global development. Its properties have led to it being one of the most prevalent human-made products on earth. It serves important functions in medicine, keeps food fresh and reduces transportation costs.

But the simple truth is that we are using plastic in an unsustainable way.

Like other nations, Australia faces domestic challenges of using too much plastic that is designed for short term consumption. While it takes only a moment for plastics to enter the environment, the impacts can last for centuries.

As an island nation, Australia experiences the impacts of the shared problem of marine plastic pollution. We see too often the devastating impacts that plastic pollution has on our marine mammals, fish and birdlife.

For our Pacific neighbours, marine plastic pollution is a significant environmental, health and economic development problem. It degrades natural ecosystems and threatens food security.

Australia is committed to strong action to transition to a more circular plastics economy.

- We have stopped the export of unprocessed plastic waste to ensure that Australia's waste does not cause environmental and human health problems elsewhere
- We are eliminating problematic and unnecessary single-use plastic products
- We are reforming our regulation of packaging to drive a greater focus on design and alignment with circular economy principles
- And we are expanding our recycling capacity and investing in new and exciting technology to revolutionise plastic recycling and to develop more sustainable alternatives to plastics.

To support our national efforts, Australia seeks an ambitious global agreement on plastic pollution and is delighted to have recently announced our membership of the High Ambition Coalition to End Plastic Pollution.

We seek an instrument that supports ambitious action on plastic pollution across the entire life cycle of plastics.

The instrument should support a safe circular economy, eliminate problematic and unnecessary plastics, and accelerate international efforts to remove harmful chemicals from product supply chains.

The instrument should support national-level actions, complemented by clear, transparent global requirements where necessary.

We look forward to working with you this week to take the first steps in agreeing the foundation elements of the treaty and prioritising workstreams for us to progress out of session.

This INC process provides a unique opportunity to align the efforts of our governments, civil society, business, scientists and others towards our goal to finalise an instrument by 2024 to end plastic pollution.

Thank you.

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Plenary Session – Agenda Item 4

Statement by Australia on Scope and Objective

- Thank you Chair
- It is the view of the Australian delegation that the form or structure of the Instrument must be informed by the **substance of the control measures**.
- It should cover pollution across the entire life cycle of plastics as well as plastic pollution from all sources.
 - This includes marine plastic pollution, micro- and nano-plastics, and any harmful chemicals used during design and production.
- The instrument must be clear, flexible to adapt to changes in scientific knowledge, technological change and other considerations.
- The structure should allow for consideration and discussion of common international control measures as well as country-level measures.
- Common global rules across the value chain are needed to address a global, transboundary problem. They will also level the playing field for industries and minimise costs of transition.
- **On the objective**, Australia's priority is to develop an ambitious global agreement that will address the adverse impacts of plastic pollution on our environment and human health.
- It will be important for the instrument to recognise the value of plastics and create a safe circular economy.
 - This must include accelerating international efforts to remove harmful chemicals from plastics and improve transparency and traceability.
- Thankyou.

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Plenary – Statement by Australia on Control Measures (30 November 2022)

Plastic pollution is a global, cross boundary problem.

International movement of plastics occurs through trade in plastic feedstock, primary plastics, additives, intermediate plastic goods, final manufactured plastic goods and plastic waste.

Given the global nature of the plastics value-chain, some consistent global measures are necessary to complement national actions.

We would like to see control measures that will help the global community to move swiftly to a safe circular economy, support circular economy trade, reduce plastic leakage to the environment, and manage plastic waste in an environmentally sound manner.

Priority controls could include, for example:

- Consistently banning chemicals of concern and hazardous additives in plastics
- A global ban on the production of oxo-degradable plastics
- Phase out of unnecessary single use, and non-recyclable plastics
- Consistent sustainability criteria applied to the design of plastic products to ensure material efficiency and safe use, recycling and repair
- Ensuring that those plastics that cannot be reused or recycled are treated in the most environmentally sound manner, in line with the waste hierarchy
- Global traceability and transparency standards, and consistent definitions, to support trade and reduce 'green-washing'
- Stimulating the demand side of the plastics economy
- Significantly improved data on plastic production, fates and flows.

National Action Plans that complement global commitments will be critical for implementing the legally binding agreement.

Reporting against National Action Plans will be important to drive progress and increase transparency.

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Plenary – Statement by Australia on scientific and technical cooperation and coordination, research and awareness raising (1 December 2022)

Thank you Chair.

The Australian delegation highlights the importance of robust scientific and technical evidence, and ongoing innovation, to achieving our joint goal of ending plastic pollution.

There is significant expertise, experience and research available across the globe.

Australia supports interventions made during this session by others, including delegations from Ecuador and Japan, that the INC process should look for ways to draw upon the existing multilateral technical and scientific workstreams and ensure that the science is understood by all parties and informs our work.

Australia would welcome the establishment of a dedicated scientific and socio-economic mechanism to support implementation of the instrument on plastic pollution.

To ensure its effectiveness, the mechanism should provide unbiased and balanced advice on clearly defined questions put to it by the Parties; and include representation from all regions. The mechanism should also draw upon Indigenous and traditional knowledge.

Chair, Australia has world-leading expertise it could offer to support the work of a future scientific mechanism. For example, our national science agency CSIRO has an Ending Plastic Waste Mission to drive Australia's circular economy and create systemic change through data science, materials and manufacturing, recycling processes and whole of life, circular solutions to reduce plastic pollution entering the environment.

We encourage early discussions at INC meetings on the potential scope of work and governance of such a mechanism, so that it can be operational at the time the instrument is finalised.

Thankyou.

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Plenary – Statement by Australia on sequencing and further work (2 December 2022)

Thank you Chair

Australia is mindful of the considerable task ahead of members and is eager to commence discussions on substantive items for a legally binding instrument at INC2.

Australia supports intersessional activities ahead of INC2, including stakeholder consultation and the preparation of a clear options paper by the Secretariat, to assist members' timely preparation for INC2.

Australia supports comments by other members that there is merit in establishing two contact groups.

We echo calls from the United Kingdom, Canada and others, that the first contact group should discuss objectives, core obligations, control measures and voluntary approaches. The second contact group should address capacity building, institutional arrangements, means of implementation and other elements.

Australia looks forward to working with all members to develop an ambitious instrument that will end plastic pollution.

Thank you.

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Plenary – Statement by Australia on stakeholder engagement (1 December 2022)

Thank you Chair

Australia considers that strong stakeholder involvement in the development of the instrument as well as its implementation, is essential to success.

Effective stakeholder involvement can take a variety of forms, including multi-stakeholder fora, stakeholder dialogues, workshops, and webinars. Offering opportunities to engage through various formats, both in person and online, will help to increase the number and diversity of views heard.

Importantly, input from stakeholders must be targeted and timely, so that it can meaningfully inform the INC process.

Australia supports provisions in the instrument that facilitate the development of a multi-stakeholder action agenda. Action to address plastic pollution requires the mobilisation of a broad range of actors and these actors must be engaged early in this process.

Australia particularly wants to ensure the meaningful engagement and participation of First Nations and Pacific Island communities in a stakeholder action agenda.

Thank you