

Australia: Submission to the INC Process

(i) Sequencing and organisation of INC

Australia recognises that 2024 is an ambitious timeframe for finalising the international legally binding instrument and that it will require a highly organised INC process.

We support a mechanism for Member States to share their vision and priorities for the instrument ahead of INC1. This will ensure that the time in INC1 is used efficiently.

INC1

As reflected in the OEWG meeting report, Australia proposes that the first INC meeting considers the foundational elements of the instrument. This includes:

- The objective
- Any subsidiary goals
- Agreement on key definitions
- Reaffirming the general principles, and
- Refining the scope of the instrument.

We also recommend INC1 aims to agree on:

- The preferred structure of the instrument
- A set of elements to inform the development of a zero draft (noting this list would not have to be exhaustive by the end of INC1, and other elements could be considered by future INCs)
- A mandate for the development of a zero draft ahead of INC2
- Clusters
- Intersessional working groups and their facilitators
- An INC and intersessional work program that can evolve over time, and
- A plan and agenda for INC2.

The first INC should also commence discussions on more substantive issues that may take several INCs to resolve, such as interactions with other international instruments, capacity building, financial mechanisms and technology transfer. It should establish the required intersessional contact groups, or technical working groups required to progress this work.

Clustering of Work

Australia supports clustering the work of the INC along the plastics lifecycle with consideration of international measures, national-level actions, and supporting mechanisms:

- **International upstream measures:** Including production, manufacturing, chemical hazard reduction and sustainable product design for a circular economy.
- **International midstream measures:** Including managing consumption and movement of plastics.
- **International downstream measures:** Including waste, end-of-life management, remediation, and marine plastic pollution.
- **National-level action:** Including national actions plans and underlying policy mechanisms.

- **Supporting mechanisms:** Including science and knowledge building, monitoring and evaluation, education and awareness raising, institutional arrangements, and funding mechanisms.

The clustering will need to be flexible due to the interactions and linkages between the topics, and a later INC will need to consider the work of the clusters with a view to ensuring they form part of a coherent whole.

(ii) Substantive issues which would contribute to preparation of documentation for INC-1, in particular regarding potential elements of the future instrument as well as priorities, needs, challenges and barriers and overview of national measures

Australian National Measures

Plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, is a problem that no one nation can solve on its own. Australia is lucky to be home to some of the most stunning marine environments in the world. By working together, we can better protect and preserve these unique ecosystems and the biodiversity they support.

Addressing plastic pollution through a new global instrument is a key pillar of Australia's international environmental agenda. We will pursue ambitious action under the instrument to end plastic pollution.

Australia is pursuing a range of national measures to address plastic pollution.

We have set industry-led National Packaging Targets, which include by 2025:

- 100% of packaging being reusable, recyclable or compostable
- 70% of our plastic packaging recycled or composted
- 50% average recycled content in all packaging including 20% average recycled content in all of our plastic packaging, and
- The phase out of problematic and unnecessary single-use plastic packaging.

As a federated state, management of plastic pollution is shared between the national Australian Government and state and territory governments. Australia will ensure that its state and territory governments are consulted throughout the development of the instrument.

All state and territory governments in Australia have banned single-use lightweight plastic bags and are committed to phasing out eight problematic and unnecessary plastic product types by 2025. These eight items include:

- Lightweight shopping bags
- "Degradable" plastics (fragmentable/oxo-degradable)
- Plastic straws
- Plastic utensils and stirrers
- Expanded polystyrene (EPS) consumer food containers (e.g. cups and clamshells)
- EPS consumer goods packaging (loose fill and moulded), and
- Microbeads in personal health care products.

Australia has also committed to progressively phase-out the export of certain waste materials, including plastic waste through its *Recycling and Waste Reduction Act (2020)*. This will contribute to reducing the flow of plastics into the world's oceans. The Act establishes a framework to: regulate the

export of waste materials; manage the environmental, health and safety impacts of products, in particular those impacts associated with the disposal of products; and provide for voluntary, co-regulatory and mandatory product stewardship schemes.

Plastic pollution is an issue of particular importance to the Pacific region. Australia is committed to working with our neighbours. We are a supporting member of the ANZPAC Plastics Pact, an industry-led regional pact focused on accelerating a circular economy for plastic packaging and reducing plastic waste and pollution in the Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands region through an ambitious set of targets.

Australia has also committed to signing up to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation New Plastics Economy Global Commitment in 2022.

Australia has provided funding assistance of \$729,000 from 2022-2024 to the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) to build capacity and support Pacific Island country preparations for, and participation in, negotiations for the instrument. This support strengthens our regional support on tackling plastic pollution, including through the \$16 million Pacific Ocean Litter Project.

We look forward to further collaboration on tackling plastic pollution with our Pacific Island neighbours and welcome suggestions on current challenges and barriers facing the region.

Documentation - Rules of Procedure

We place importance on completing the Rules of Procedure that will apply to the negotiations on the new instrument. Australia will make every effort to resolve the rule relating to the voting rights of Regional Economic Integration Organisations with interested Members ahead of INC1, to ensure the work of the Committee can be progressed quickly.

(iii) [The content and considerations for the preparation of the forum as set out in the OEWG information document entitled 'Preparations for the forum' \(UNEP/PP/OEWG/1/INF/4\)](#)

Australia supports maximising opportunities for stakeholder engagement, including through the stakeholder forum at INC1. The stakeholder engagement scope needs to be clearly defined so outputs can directly support the negotiations.

Key stakeholder groups include:

- Industry representatives, including:
 - Plastic producers
 - Industries that are major producers of plastic packaging for their products
 - Recyclers
 - Plastic commodity traders
 - Value chain logistics managers
 - Informal waste pickers
- Non-government organisations including representatives of civil society with an interest in the environment and the plastics value chain
- Intergovernmental organisations with an interest in the environment and the plastic value chain
- First Nations people who care for country, and

- Researchers with expertise in the plastics value chain and in plastic pollution.

We support ensuring that the outcomes of the stakeholder forum are directly relevant and communicated to the INC. There should be a two-way dialogue to ensure that those who will be implementing and impacted by a new international instrument to end plastic pollution have the opportunity to contribute to its development.