



Statement In Support of the UN Global Plastic Pollution Treaty

In support of the UN Global Plastic Pollution Treaty's INC efforts, the Congregations of St. Joseph, representing 10,000 Catholic sisters committed to creating bonds of unity in 46 countries, share our priorities and our commitment to engage in substantive discussion during negotiating sessions. Our concern for the care of Earth, our common home, impels us to address the devastating impacts of plastic pollution. We advocate for systemic change to address plastic pollution at global, national, and local levels at the same time we commit ourselves to personal changes that support these goals.

We support establishing an ambitious and effective international legally binding treaty that ends plastic pollution and safeguards all beings and the environment from the harmful effects of plastic pollution throughout the life cycle of plastic. *UNEP/PP/INC.2/4, II.A.9.(a)*

As Catholic sisters we have engaged in consensus decision-making as our method of communal governance for decades. Our experience is that through discernment and listening to all voices, we are able to make choices for the common good. We commend the INC for using this method since the acceptance of decisions made is critical for the successful implementation of the treaty. Although many differing ideas have emerged in INC 1 and 2, it was obvious that delegates were listening and learning from each other. Delegates committed to the urgent necessity to move forward were able to find procedural compromises. We recognize that consensus of 100% of the member countries is not always possible. By allowing for the option of an issue being decided by a two-thirds majority after all efforts to reach consensus have been exhausted and no agreement has been reached, the rights of minority opinion are protected, incentives for compromise are ensured, and the INC can move towards the common good. *UNEP/PP/INC.2/3, VIII, Rule 38.1*

Our gravest concerns are plastic pollution's upstream and downstream effects on the health of humans, living beings and ecosystems. Therefore, we strongly support the following:

- Shift rapidly to a circular economy for plastics where the producers are responsible to ensure environmentally sound practices at each stage of production, usage and disposal, including recycling (not downcycling) so that plastics can be reused and a decreased amount of virgin plastic is needed. *UNEP/PP/INC.2/4 B.1 10(a)(i)*
- Prioritize eliminating single-use plastics and the addition of harmful classes of chemicals and polymers to all plastics, allowing for a toxin-free plastics economy. *UNEP/PP/INC.2/4 B.2.11 (b)&(c) and 12. (a) (i)*
- Quickly transition nonessential uses of plastics to more environmentally friendly materials. *UNEP/PP/INC.2/4 B.2. 11 (c) & 3. 12.(c)(i) & 8. 17 (b)*
- Develop standards for the composition of plastics that allow for transparency in labeling so that producers and consumers can be aware of both composition and safe recycling or disposal methods. *UNEP/PP/INC.2/4 B.3 12. (b) (ii) & B.6. 15.(d)*

- Apply the “precautionary principle” in those situations where there is the possibility of harm from certain plastic additives while conclusive evidence is not yet available. There is sufficient data to begin prioritizing transitions based on potential risk. *UNEP/PP/INC.2/4 B.3.12(a)(i)*
- Address microplastic leakage, with emphasis on road transport, release of dust and fibers, and wastewater sludge. *UNEP/PP/INC.2/4 B.4. 13. (a) (i) & (b)(i-iii)*

We advocate for the following Means of Implementation:

- Apply the UN principle, “polluter pays” so that the costs of all impacts on human health and the environment caused by the whole lifecycle of plastics are shared globally and not only within national boundaries. This should include a global Extended Producers’ Responsibility system that addresses current, future and legacy plastics production, especially plastics with toxic additives. *UNEP/PP/INC.2/4 C.1. 24(e)(ii)*
- Given the global nature of this crisis, promote sharing of scientific information, technology and financial resources with developing nations through a hybrid approach. *UNEP/PP/INC.2/4 C.1. 24.(c)*
- Work toward fair wages for waste pickers, their protection from toxins and a “just transition” to new jobs as we move towards decreased plastic use and new modes of waste management. *UNEP/PP/INC.2/4 B.11. 20 (a-c)*

The Congregations of St. Joseph calls for a treaty with specific controls that can be easily amended as science and technology evolve. We support the idea of including annexes which can be updated as new information becomes available. This will keep the treaty relevant and effective for addressing plastic pollution. *UNEP/PP/INC.2/4 F.41 (a-f)*