

Representatives to the Open Ended Working Group  
on the Plastics Treaty  
c/o UNEP Secretariat



[www.no-burn.org](http://www.no-burn.org)

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Excellencies:

Congratulations on your historic achievement at UNEA 5.2! Thanks to the ambitious mandate that you crafted in Nairobi, the world knows that a solution to the plastic problem is within our reach – and that this body is the one that will deliver it.

I write to you on behalf of GAIA, a global network of more than 800 organizations in 92 countries working toward a world free of waste and environmental injustice. We are a constituent member of Break Free From Plastic, and our member organizations work on every aspect of plastic pollution, from cradle to grave.

As you lay out the agenda for the upcoming negotiations, I urge you to consider the following priority goals for the treaty. Each will require substantial time in the negotiating agenda, but that is as it should be: a successful treaty will be an ambitious treaty.

1. **Cap and reduce plastic production.** Plastic is a multifaceted problem: it is a marine problem, a climate problem, a human health problem, an ecosystem toxicity problem, an environmental justice problem, a just transition problem, and more. None of these aspects can be satisfactorily addressed while the quantity of plastic continues to grow. Any successful solution to plastic begins with reducing the amount produced, and the treaty should deliver a mechanism to do so.
2. **Improve the circularity of plastic.** As currently produced, very little plastic is technically or economically recyclable. The treaty should eliminate non-recyclable polymers, additives, and fillers, and restrict plastic production to those products that can be mechanically recycled and for which a market exists.
3. **Ensure a just transition.** Waste pickers and other labor sectors that have come to rely upon plastic must have a seat at the table as governments and industry design alternatives to the plastic-based economy. A reuse economy will create more jobs than the plastic-oriented economy, but the transition must be managed fairly.
4. **Support zero waste.** Financial and regulatory support for reuse businesses, alternative service delivery models, and other elements of zero waste are required.
5. **Reduce the toxicity of plastic.** Toxic additives and the most problematic polymers, such as PVC, should simply be banned. This will improve public health while also improving the circularity of plastic.
6. **Shift the financial burden of plastic.** Currently, the petrochemical industry profits from plastic production while local governments bear the brunt of plastic collection and clean up costs. Industry must absorb the true cost of plastic, including ecosystem and human health damage.
7. **Build policy on proven solutions.** Alternatives to plastic, including traditional compostables and modern reusables, are well-established. By contrast, industry

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promises of “chemical recycling” and “plastic neutrality” are fundamentally flawed and incapable of truly addressing plastic pollution.



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We look forward to assisting you as you craft an ambitious treaty to solve this most pressing of environmental problems.

Sincerely,

Neil Tangri, Ph.D.  
Science and Policy Director