

# Statement from Vital Strategies to the Intergovernmental Negotiating Conference (INC-1) of the United Nations Treaty to End Plastics Pollution

Presented remotely by Jorge Alday, Director, STOP and a member of the Stop Tobacco Pollution Alliance

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Thank you to the UN Environment Program, delegates of member States and esteemed civil society colleagues for the opportunity to contribute. My name is Jorge Alday. I am a director at [Vital Strategies](http://Vital Strategies) working with [STOP](http://STOP), a global tobacco industry watchdog and part of the Stop Tobacco Pollution Alliance.

Plastics are taking a devastating toll on our planet and on human, animal, bird and marine life. We have passed the point where ‘cleaning up’ plastics on our streets and beaches, rivers and oceans is enough. Recycling is not enough. And we can’t rely on powerful companies that produce plastic and profit from plastic to do enough on their own.

So we need a firm and binding global commitment to reduce all unnecessary plastics. We recognize that not all plastics are the same. Some are necessary, many are not. Some are more toxic than others. Some clearly harm people and our environment.

On each of these counts, cigarettes filters stand out as both harmful and completely unnecessary. Cigarette filters are designed to make smoking easier and that same design contributes to massive plastic pollution. 4.5 trillion cigarettes are discarded every year, making these products the most littered item on Earth.

The tobacco industry suggests it’s a positive force – it is not. That is why we already have an entire treaty, the World Health Organization [Framework Convention on Tobacco Control](http://Framework Convention on Tobacco Control), in place to try and reduce the devastating toll this industry takes on health.

We now have the opportunity to reduce that same industry’s impact on our planet. Cigarette filters must be removed. [They are toxic, single-use, plastic products](http://They are toxic, single-use, plastic products) that only provide profits to already wealthy and questionable corporations.

For this meeting to deliver a future with less plastic pollution, tobacco should not be afforded any exemption. A decision to ban filters in cigarettes, most of which are made from plastic, is perhaps the fastest and easiest way this meeting could contribute to global public and environmental health.



**About Vital Strategies' work in tobacco control:**

Vital Strategies works globally and in more than 40 countries to support the adoption of proven policies to reduce tobacco use. Our global team of experts use policy, advocacy and strategic communication to help governments adopt life-saving, public health “best buys” like comprehensive smoke-free laws and high tobacco taxes. Our evidence-based public education campaigns – designed to encourage quitting, delay initiation, support policy goals like compliance with smoke-free laws, and over the long term, reduce the acceptability of smoking and change attitudes about the tobacco industry – have been seen by more than 2 billion people. We partner with American Cancer Society to produce The Tobacco Atlas, (sixth ed.) the most comprehensive report on the evolving global tobacco epidemic, and support production of WHO's MPOWER reports. Vital Strategies is a main partner in the \$1 billion Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use.

For more information on Vital Strategies' work in tobacco control, please visit:  
<http://www.vitalstrategies.org/programs/tobacco-control/>