

Delegates urged to maintain ambition as time runs out for agreement on a treaty to end plastic pollution

The Ellen MacArthur Foundation
INC-4 Outcome Statement



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Following the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-4) to develop an internationally legally binding treaty to end plastic pollution, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation has issued the following statement.

A UN treaty based on legally binding global rules and comprehensive circular economy measures addressing the full life cycle of plastics represents a unique opportunity to accelerate systems change and end plastic pollution. It is clear that we cannot recycle our way out of the plastic pollution crisis. To drive change at scale, it is critical to include in the treaty strong obligations and measures that reduce plastic production and use, enable implementation of reuse and refill models, redesign of products, and create conditions to expand infrastructure for environmentally sound and safe recycling and management of plastic waste. Recognising that countries and regions are at different stages of development, the treaty needs to ensure a formalised support mechanism to provide assistance where it is most needed and therefore strong provisions around just transition and means of implementation are essential so that the treaty can be effectively implemented.

During the fourth meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-4) in Ottawa, we were encouraged by the progress made by members in developing the treaty text further in many areas including the provisions on product design, reuse, and refill systems. And equally, we welcome the decision to hold further discussions on important topics that are key to be included in the final text such as mobilising financial resources for the implementation of the treaty as well on approaches to chemicals of concern in plastic products and to product design.

However, the divide between Member States supporting binding global rules and those preferring nationally determined measures in many areas continued to be a key issue. In addition, a lack of agreement remained around taking action on plastic production and the reduction of primary plastic polymers as opposed to focusing mainly on plastic recycling and better waste management.

We know that voluntary and fragmented action is not enough, and global rules are crucial to create a level playing field and stimulate investment and innovation. It is also clear that downstream measures alone are not sufficient to end the plastic pollution crisis and so we welcome and encourage the continued ambition shown by many governments throughout this negotiation process.

However, it is critical to also explore other issues in the treaty negotiations like reducing virgin plastic production. If left unaddressed, plastic production and use is projected to increase exponentially, risking efforts to limit global warming within 1.5°C, and would overwhelm national waste management and recycling programmes. We therefore call

on governments to explore ways of advancing progress in this area together with relevant stakeholders. This is why we are also giving our backing to the [Bridge to Busan declaration](#) which is supported by countries to keep the discussion on addressing primary plastic polymer production on the table of the treaty negotiations.

Rob Opsomer, Executive Lead of Plastics and Finance at the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, said: “With time running out to negotiate the treaty before the final round of talks in the Republic of Korea this November, we urge the delegations to redouble their efforts in progressing the relevant discussions interessionally and to keep the ambition high in order to secure a strong treaty outcome at INC5.

“We remain committed to supporting the negotiations by sharing our insights and expertise and continuing to champion this once-in-a-generation opportunity for a UN treaty based on legally binding global rules and a comprehensive circular economy approach.

“Together with the [Business Coalition for a Global Plastics Treaty](#), convened by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and WWF, we want to see measures addressing the full-life cycle in order to eliminate the plastics we don’t need, innovate towards new materials and business models, and circulate any plastic we still need to ensure that we realise the vision of a world in which plastic never becomes waste or pollution.”

For further information, please visit ellenmacarthurfoundation.org