Scientists' Declaration for the Global Plastics Treaty – updated for INC-5

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Installation and photo: Benjamin Von Wong

The signatories of this declaration are independent scientists with expertise on plastics[1] who are free of conflicts of interest associated with the life cycle of plastics[2].

Plastic pollution[3] represents a serious environmental and human health problem at a global scale, negatively impacting the environmental, social, and economic dimensions of sustainable development.

Approximately 460 million tons of plastics are produced annually, and production is set to triple by 2060 under current business-as-usual growth rates (~4%/year). In order to protect human health and the environment, we call on members of the United Nations Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to

agree on a comprehensive and ambitious global plastics treaty that accurately and effectively responds to the robust scientific evidence, including but not limited to the following:

- **Plastic pollution occurs across the full life cycle of plastics, beginning with raw material extraction and production, and including use, disposal, removal of legacy plastics, recycling, incineration, and the remediation of contaminated environments.**
- **Plastic pollution causes substantive widespread harms including adverse impacts on the environment, climate, biodiversity and human health; and negatively impacts economies as well as human rights, equity, and wellbeing.**

The harm caused by plastic pollution cannot be prevented by improvements in waste management alone. For the treaty to be effective, plastic pollution should be addressed via the waste hierarchy, prioritizing reduction and time-bound elimination of primary plastic polymer production, redesign, reuse, refill, repair, repurpose and remanufacture, and safer and more sustainable waste management.

Based on robust scientific evidence, a successful treaty will require **global, legally binding obligations applied across the full life cycle** requiring parties to:

- rapidly and substantially **reduce the production of non-essential plastics** irrespective of their feedstock
- **regulate production, use, and emissions of plastic chemicals, including polymers, and groups of chemicals**
- **reduce the production of micro and nanosized plastics as well as their shedding from products**
- ensure **transparency** by disclosing health, safety, and sustainability information about plastics and their composition
- ensure plastics are **trackable and traceable**
- establish **harmonized methodologies for data collection and reporting** on plastic flows, addressing critical data gaps
- **promote reuse, refill and repair and remanufacturing** of plastics products
- **improve waste management systems**, with safe and sustainable collection, sorting, treatment, recycling and / or disposal
- regularly **monitor and report** on progress toward plastic pollution prevention
- **protect the human rights** of populations, workers, and communities

Scientific evidence indicates that a successful implementation will require:

- dedicated **financial, technical assistance, and capacity building mechanisms**
- **international trade regulations**
- **just transition** strategies for populations, communities, and workers
- globally harmonized **safety and sustainability criteria**
- harmonised assessment of the **essential use of all plastics** and support for parties to swiftly transition away from groupings of plastics listed in the annex of the treaty
- the prioritization of **human rights** including the right to a safe, clean, and healthy environment, and the rights to access to information and to science
- prioritized contributions from **Indigenous rights holders**
- ensuring **transparency of work and decision making processes** that allow for active participation of multidisciplinary and gender-balanced **independent scientists, experts, and knowledge holders** who represent all stages of the plastics life cycle, and who are **free from conflicts of interests**
- **standardized global monitoring of plastics**, needed for managing and measuring and **reporting** effectiveness of the treaty as well as compliance

Based on the above, we, the undersigned, call on members of the United Nations Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to agree on a comprehensive and ambitious global plastics treaty to end plastic pollution by 2040.

By signing this declaration, each signatory confirms they are an independent scientific expert in an aspect/aspects of the plastics life cycle who is free of conflicts of interest associated with the plastics supply chain.

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1. Plastics encompass chemicals associated with plastics across their full life cycle, including polymers and products, intentionally and non-intentionally added substances, nano- and microplastics, and plastic alternatives..

2. The life cycle of plastics begins with the extraction of the bio and fossil fuel feedstocks used in the production of plastics, transportation, production, manufacturing, use, and end of life phases, in alignment with UNEP's working definitions for plastic pollution and the full life cycle approach for plastics (United Nations Environment Programme, 2022).

3. Plastic pollution includes plastic products, plastic materials, polymers, intentionally and unintentionally added substances in plastic materials, nano- and microplastics and other degradation and breakdown products, and other chemical emissions related to industrial processes throughout the plastic lifecycle from extraction, through production, trade, use, waste, and waste removal.