

Secretary of State for Environment Food and Rural Affairs
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Dear Steve Barclay,

Re: Global Plastics Treaty INC-4 negotiations

I write on behalf of the Environmental Investigation Agency, together with a group of UK-based NGOs to urge you to seize the opportunity to take an ambitious approach to negotiations in the upcoming Global Plastics Treaty negotiations on plastic pollution (INC-4). We would like to meet with you ahead of the next negotiations to discuss our priorities, provide technical input and explore how we may work together towards an ambitious outcome.

We recognise the UK's leadership as a member of the High Ambition Coalition and the commitment this shows to a strong legally binding treaty. We believe that it is crucial for the United Kingdom to translate this ambition into concrete support for the most essential pillars of a plastics treaty truly capable of protecting human health and the environment. The UK delegation to the negotiations should prioritise the below topics.

Supporting and prioritising upstream measures to regulate production at the global level.

We stand at a critical juncture for protecting and advancing the provisions on primary plastic polymer production in the treaty text. A freeze and phase-down of plastics production at the global level will be necessary not only to end plastic pollution but to ensure we keep on track to limit warming to 1.5°C and promote a genuinely safe and toxic-free circular economy.

Modelling suggests that to align with a 1.5-degree global warming scenario, total plastic production volumes should be reduced by at least 75% by 2040.¹ We believe this should be a starting point for a discussion on setting a collective global ambition for production reduction. To complement this, the treaty must include robust provisions on preventing plastic pellet loss. We would also like to reiterate [our recommendation](#) for the UK to set mandatory reporting and a national target for halving resource consumption by 2030.

Developing of a strong suite of reuse provisions.

Despite significant investment over many decades, only 9% of plastic waste is recycled globally, while plastic consumption has quadrupled over the past 30 years. Relying on recyclability is insufficient to address the plastic crisis and for many plastics it is neither technically possible nor logistically feasible. A shift to reuse systems at scale will need clear and enforceable definitions and standards, overall and sector-specific targets and indicators on reuse to be included within the treaty. [Reuse policies](#) should be accompanied by reduction targets for overall plastic use which link international and domestic demands.

Champion the inclusion of measures to regulate the transboundary movement of waste.

¹ Eunomia (2022), 'Is Net Zero Enough for the Material Production Sector', 10th November 2022; <https://www.eunomia.co.uk/reports-tools/is-net-zero-enough-for-the-materials-production-sector>

The UK should advocate for the incorporation of measures to stop plastic waste trade or regulate and/or control the illegal movement of waste. This must be accompanied by increased global transparency, identification and restriction of hazardous polymers and chemicals and addressing mechanisms to manage illegal trade in plastic waste and non-Party trade in complementary coordination of existing governance.

In 2019, the UK government committed to banning plastic waste exports to non-OECD countries and there is significant civil society support for this to be extended to OECD countries. To match this ambition, we call on the UK to support enhancing control requirements, addressing challenges in plastic waste trade and ensuring compliance through effective regulations and transparent monitoring.

Ensuring that the treaty achieves a just transition for workers in informal and cooperative settings is crucial.

Throughout the Treaty negotiation process, the UK has shown leadership in this area and widespread support has ensured the inclusion of a dedicated just transition provision. This has the potential to ensure that the rights and livelihoods of more than 20 million waste pickers are upheld, and their role in waste management is recognised.

However, until the final text is agreed, this hangs in the balance. INC-4 will be crucial to ensuring that the core obligation for a just transition is retained and strengthened in accordance with the recommendations made by the International Alliance of Waste Pickers. Priorities also include ensuring that references to waste pickers are retained throughout the text, and definitions of key terms, such as waste pickers, just transition, and workers in informal and cooperative settings, are added.

Ensuring the treaty provides adequate financing to support implementation.

We believe a newly established dedicated multilateral fund created alongside the future treaty will be required to deliver predictable financial assistance. Without this support, implementation and compliance will be impossible for many developing countries. To supplement core multilateral funding, additional funds should be mobilised from a range of sources, including the private sector, to operationalise the polluter pays principle. The financial mechanisms should furthermore be additional and complementary to existing funds and facilitate better access to these resources. Allocation of resources should align with the zero-waste hierarchy, prioritizing reduction and reuse before costly recycling infrastructure.

Lead by example; do not undermine domestic commitments and policies at the global level.

The 2019 Conservative manifesto promised that the government would “continue to lead the world in tackling plastics pollution, both in the UK and internationally”. However, over the last few years many of these measures have been weakened, delayed or yet to be considered, including Extended Producer Responsibility and Deposit Return Schemes. This means the UK is lagging our European counterparts. However, the UK has an opportunity at INC-4 to provide leadership and ambition over the coming months.

The UK has so far been a constructive player in the talks, taking a proactive role in unblocking process hurdles - but even bolder leadership and higher ambition will be needed to secure strong global targets on production. We acknowledge that securing a strong deal will be a challenge, particularly regarding a global target for production reduction, but one that will bring great reward. By pushing



Wildlife and
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for an ambitious treaty, the UK can use this as a diplomatic opportunity to align with key allies to achieve a shared goal and demonstrate its commitment to multilateralism.

We thank you for your consideration of these priority issues and request a meeting to discuss these issues ahead of the negotiations, or in person in Ottawa.

Yours sincerely,



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