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Cc:

The Rt Hon Jonathan Reynolds
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25th July 2024

Dear Secretary of State,

We would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. We, a group of Civil Society organisations dedicated to protecting people and our planet, stand ready to support you in your work.

It is with this in mind that we are writing to you regarding an issue of high priority. In November of this year, the final round of negotiations for a new internationally legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution, otherwise known as the Global Plastics Treaty, will be held in Busan, Republic of Korea.

Plastic pollution is an issue of national and global significance impacting the environment and human health at all stages of the plastics lifecycle. We welcome the five top priorities for your work at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, however we note that without taking significant action to halt the mounting plastics pollution crisis these priorities will be near impossible to meet. Indeed, negotiating and implementing an ambitious Global Plastics Treaty is an essential prerequisite to moving towards a zero-waste economy.

Scientists, businesses, civil society organisations and communities across the world are united in the view that to end plastic pollution, we must reduce plastic production and transition to genuinely safe, sustainable and zero waste alternatives. The impacts of plastic pollution on biodiversity are well-documented and there is a growing body of evidence about the relationship between plastics and human health impacts, but it is important to recognise that plastic production is also a significant driver of climate change. Plastics production is on track to increase by 2.5 to 4% annually. If left unabated, this will consume at least 21 to 31% of the remaining carbon budget to limit global warming to 1.5°C, making

achieving that target virtually impossible. To avoid disastrous consequences for people and nature in the UK and globally, we must bend the curve and begin to limit and reduce plastics production.¹

Plastics remain a key issue for the British public. Several polls in recent years have shown that Britons overwhelmingly favour cutting plastic production. A 2023 Survation poll showed that 75% of voters think that a Prime Minister who supports the UN Global Plastic Treaty to end single-use plastic portrays strong leadership.² A 2024 poll by Censuswide found that 74% of UK residents agree that to stop plastic pollution, we need to cut plastic production. And polling by the University of Birmingham found that plastic-related issues top the list of environmental problems that the UK public wants to tackle.³ Despite strong domestic support for action on plastics, under the previous government progressive policy has faced numerous delays, backtracking and a fundamental lack of ambition.

Despite delays in domestic legislation, the UK was an early member of the High Ambition Coalition, a group of governments committed to ending plastic pollution by 2040, who have called for binding controls to restrain and reduce production of plastics to sustainable levels and align treaty provisions with the 1.5°C target of the Paris Agreement. We have also seen the UK champion zero waste initiatives in the negotiations, such as the transition to reuse and refill and the shift away from problematic and avoidable plastic products, especially those designed with single-use applications in mind. This continued vision and leadership will be vital as we enter the final phase of negotiations this year.

However, while laudable, these measures will be insufficient to protect human and environmental health and ensure we meet our climate ambitions unless they are coupled with an emphasis on halting the oversupply of new plastics which continues to undermine efforts across the lifecycle of plastics. Therefore, we are looking to the UK to take a strong stance on binding controls to reduce plastic production as part of its position.

The plastics negotiations are an early opportunity for the new Government to improve the UK's reputation on the world stage, create a legacy as a world-leading government on climate and nature protection for decades to come and demonstrate leadership by providing a clear vision for the collective global ambition necessary to end plastic pollution.

We urge the new government to set a clear and unambiguous position heading into the negotiations by:

1. Signing the [Bridge to Busan](#) declaration and encouraging other countries to join
2. Committing to ministerial engagement in plastics dialogues and events in the lead up to the fifth round of negotiations
3. Taking an active role in negotiating for a global target to cut plastic production, for example by advocating for the [40% reduction by 2040](#) as proposed by Rwanda and Peru during the fourth session

¹ <https://energyanalysis.lbl.gov/publications/climate-impact-primary-plastic>

² greenpeace.org.uk/resources/climate-opinion-poll/

³ <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/2024/plastics-not-a-priority-for-politicians-but-are-for-the-public-says-new-research>

4. Matching leadership in the negotiations with strong domestic policies on plastic pollution, including delivering a deposit return scheme, a ban on new incineration capacity, regulation to prevent plastic pellet loss and consultation on a ban on plastic waste exports, to redress years of inaction and delays in domestic plastics policy.

We look forward to working with you in the years to come in our shared goal of moving the UK towards a zero-waste economy and truly ending plastic pollution.

Having met with ministers from the previous government to discuss the treaty we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and your team in advance of the meeting in Busan.

Yours sincerely,



