

3 KEY PRINCIPLES FOR A PLASTICS TREATY

The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) has called for this meeting of an ad hoc open-ended working group to prepare for the work of the intergovernmental negotiating committee (INC) on a Plastics Treaty. UNEA resolution 5/14 specifies that the INC is to develop an international legally binding agreement based on a comprehensive approach that addresses the full lifecycle of plastic, and, among other provisions, calls for an agreement

“To promote sustainable production and consumption of plastics, including, among others, product design, and environmentally sound waste management, including through resource efficiency and circular economy approaches.”

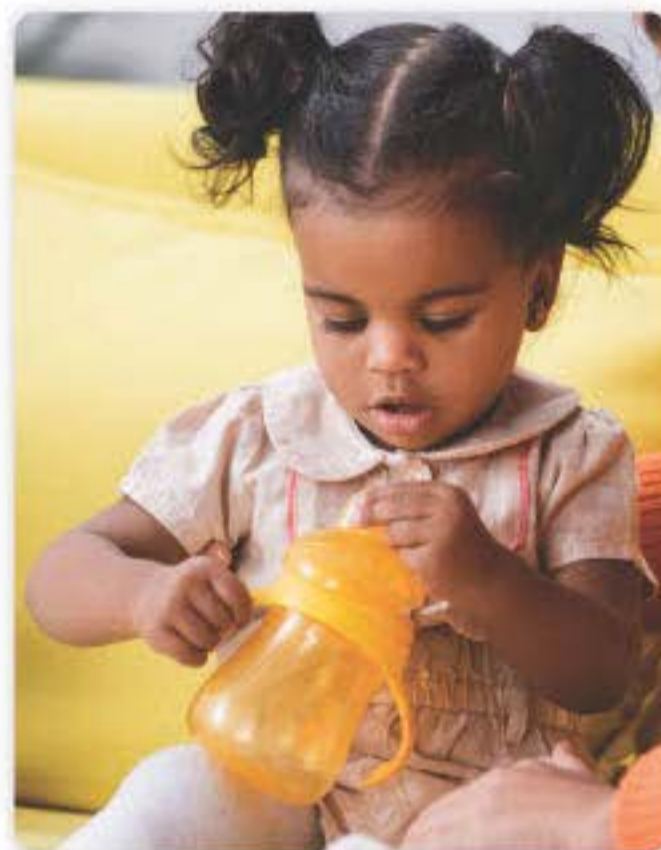
IPEN believes that an understanding of the following three principles will be foundational for a Plastics Treaty that addresses the human health and climate threats from plastics throughout their lifecycle, and for promoting alternatives that truly meet the needs of a circular economy.

PRINCIPLE 1: UNDERSTANDING PLASTICS AS CARBON AND CHEMICALS

Plastics are made from fossil fuels (oil and gas) with a mix of chemicals. Plastics consist of polymers (large number of similar chemical units bonded together) combined with other chemicals added for specific properties (e.g., to make plastics flexible, UV resistant, durable, fire resistant, etc.). More than 10,000 different chemicals are used in plastics. To solve the plastics problem we must address the lifecycle of plastics and avoid the industry’s efforts to shift the responsibility downstream by focusing only on consumer products like single-use plastics. Instead, we must address all plastics and put the responsibility for reducing production on the source of the problem, the fossil fuel industry, not on consumers.

PRINCIPLE 2: ADDRESSING THE HARMFUL HEALTH EFFECTS FROM CHEMICALS IN PLASTICS

Plastic pollution is visible and well documented, but we often overlook the invisible chemicals in plastics that pose hazards to people and the environment. While we may not see them, studies show that chemicals from plastics are linked to serious health problems. Chemicals in plastics have been linked to cancer, brain damage, infertility, and other serious conditions. People are exposed to harmful chemicals from plastics during their production, transport, use and disposal – but since plastics are not labeled, we can’t know what chemicals are in them, making it impossible to avoid and safely manage these hazardous chemicals. When plastics pollute our bodies and our communities, we lose the opportunity to live healthy, productive lives.



PRINCIPLE 3: RECOGNIZING THAT TOXIC CHEMICALS MAKE PLASTICS INCOMPATIBLE WITH A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

The toxic chemicals in plastics make them inherently incompatible with non-toxic, circular economic approaches. Recycling plastics is a myth marketed by the industry. Even though very few plastics are ever recycled, these recycled plastics pass hazardous chemicals uncontrollably to new products, exposing more people to harmful chemicals. Industry's plan to burn plastic waste as fuel is even worse – because burning fossil fuel-based plastics produces even deadlier chemicals, magnifying the health threat and exacerbating climate change. We need immediate steps to significantly reduce production of plastics and a fundamental shift in our materials economy to replace them with safer, sustainable materials that promote a healthy, circular economic future.



With 25 years of contributing to global policy processes, IPEN believes that the Plastics Treaty process is a critical opportunity to build on and fill the gaps in existing international laws. A plastics treaty must ensure global controls are developed that not only address visible plastic pollution but that protect our health and the environment from the invisible toxic chemicals in plastics.

IPEN IS CALLING FOR A PLASTICS TREATY THAT:

- Protects health and the environment
- Ends the production and use of toxic chemicals in plastics
- Removes toxic impacts at all stages of the lifecycle of plastics
- Bans recycling of plastics containing hazardous chemicals
- Protects the public's right to know about chemicals in plastics and information on plastic production and waste exports
- Charges plastic producers to finance the treaty
- Promotes safer sustainable materials for a toxics-free circular economy
- Curbs toxic and climate pollutants

IPEN has a 25-year track record of contributing to the development of global treaties to protect public health and the environment. Our members across more than 125 countries are uniquely positioned to effectively leverage our experience, technical expertise, and scientific integrity to push for a meaningful treaty to end the health threats posed by toxic plastics.