



BRIEF

HIGH-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS
PLASTICS POLICY • MAR 2024



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INC-4: TIME TO SPEED UP PRIORITIES

STATES MUST ADVANCE BINDING RULES ON THE MOST POLLUTING PLASTICS,
AND PREPARE FOR A FULL DRAFT TREATY TEXT THROUGH INTERSESSIONAL WORK

INC-3: THE MEETING OF TWO OUTCOMES

The [third meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on plastic pollution](#) (INC-3) saw a clear majority of states cooperating in good faith, with constructive proposals for a treaty grounded in global, binding rules. More than 110 countries—representing a historic movement for regulating plastic pollution at the global level—supported global bans and phase-outs of the most harmful and avoidable plastics and associated chemicals.

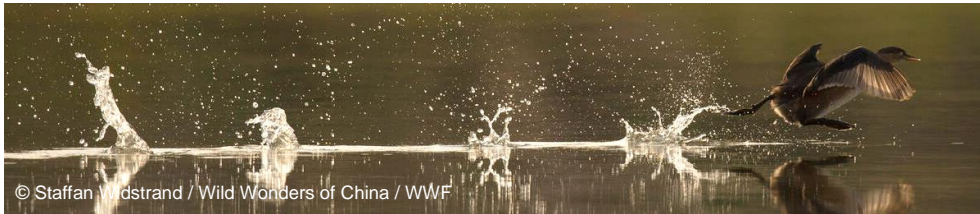
Yet, INC-3 concluded with [no formal intersessional work for the treaty development](#). The result in part reflects the delaying and obstructionist tactics of a small minority of states with deep petrochemical interests. On the other hand, it hints at the treaty's true potential for transformative and binding, global actions against plastic pollution: for there would not have been much opposition, otherwise.

The [upcoming fourth meeting of the INC](#) will once again present a decisive opportunity for creating the treaty that the world needs. With businesses, the public and science on their side, the large majority of states must urgently step up and push back against delaying tactics, to develop a treaty that can deliver real impacts. Now is the time to speed up progress on the treaty's top priorities. The courage for decisive actions—of those most ambitious in this negotiation process—will determine the international community's chance to end plastic pollution.

WWF calls on states to prioritise the most important binding rules on the most polluting plastics, and firmly reject bad-faith obstructions in the two remaining meetings of the INC.

At INC-4, WWF urges States to:

- **Prioritise negotiations in areas of greatest significance** to ending plastic pollution, including mobilising broad support for:
 - Binding, global bans, phase-outs and phased reductions to eliminate high-risk and avoidable plastic products and materials;
 - Binding, global requirements on product design and performance to ensure reduction, reuse and safe recycling for all plastic products;
 - Strong implementation support, including a holistic finance package utilizing all possible sources, technology transfer, technical assistance, capacity building, and a robust financing mechanism for the implementation of specific binding measures;
 - Provisions on monitoring and reporting, periodic assessments, mechanisms for scientific recommendations, and decision-making by Parties to continue strengthening the treaty over time.
- **Broaden existing majority support on text options, and agree on intersessional workplan** for top priorities:
 - Criteria to assess and list problematic and avoidable plastic products, and chemicals and polymers of concern, and for prohibitions and phased reductions;
 - General and sector-specific criteria and requirements for product design and performance towards non-toxic circularity;
 - Implementation measures, including compliance, reporting, and assessment; financial mechanisms;
- **Mandate the development of a full draft of the treaty, before INC-5.**



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GLOBAL RULES REMAIN NEGOTIATION'S TOP PRIORITY

The growing plastic pollution crisis demands policy options beyond the voluntary policies and initiatives from the last three decades. Despite the increase in voluntary actions by countries and companies, plastic pollution continued its ever-upward trend. Recent modelling confirms that [without a comprehensive set of binding global rules, mismanaged plastic volumes would almost double](#), from 110 Mt in 2019, to 205 Mt by 2040. In other words, a new treaty with purely voluntary actions does the opposite of ending plastic pollution: it would most likely result in higher pollution levels. To actively propose a purely voluntary approach to the treaty—or to passively accept it—is to increase the certainty of plastic pollution's irreparable damage to our environment and our health. It is unacceptable.

A treaty with clearly defined binding, global rules would also lessen the burdens on national governments and authorities. Implementing globally-agreed-upon measures means being able to rely on pre-determined solutions that are informed by global best practices and best available science, making it less arduous and time consuming for national governments than when countries are tasked with finding their own solutions. Harmonised global rules mean standardized metrics, indicators, and methodologies for assessing actions and impacts, reducing the complexity of compliance, monitoring and reporting. The costs of national planning, monitoring and reporting could therefore be reduced, allowing for adequate and predictable funding to support the direct costs of implementing specific rules.

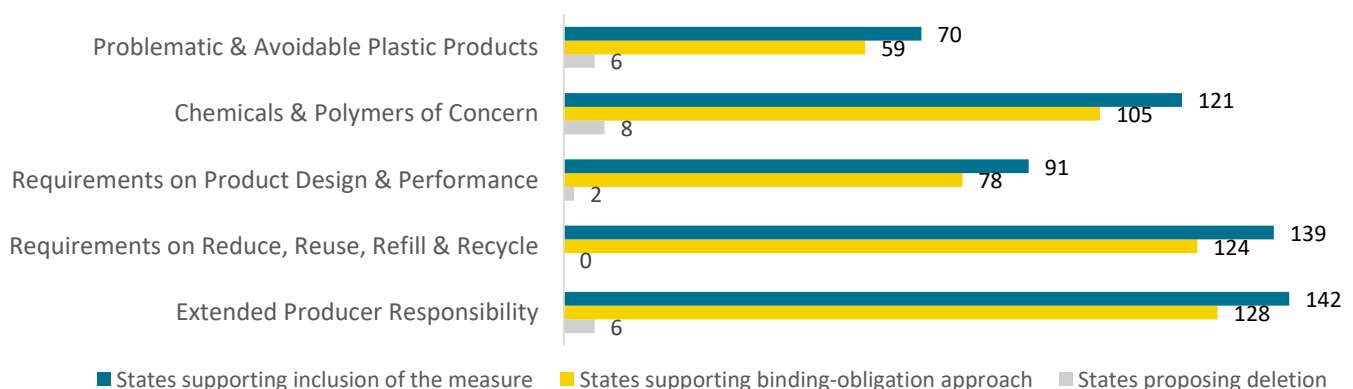
Furthermore, global rules could distribute the burden of addressing plastic pollution around the world. It is estimated that the environmental, social and economic costs of plastic over its lifecycle [are 8 times higher for low and middle-income countries \(LMICs\) than high income countries \(HICs\)](#). High-income countries (HICs) have more influence on the production and design of products, and more capacity to manage or export their plastic waste and mitigate pollution impacts. Low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) are grappling with an ever-growing volume of plastic waste, but most are not well placed to control upstream global production and consumption structures. Global rules could empower LMICs' influence on upstream decisions, which have major implications for LMICs' downstream management, but these decisions are currently often outside of their control.

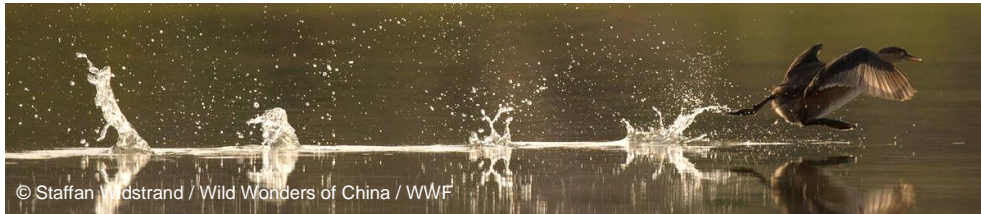
In addition to binding, global rules, including bans, phased reductions, and requirements on design and performance, the combination of implementation measures—including, *inter alia*, a holistic financial package utilizing both public and private sources, together with other means of implementation, mechanisms to ensure a just transition for vulnerable groups in the plastics value chain, and robust compliance mechanisms—will be essential to achieving the long-term goal of ending plastic pollution.

THE ODDS IN OTTAWA

The [Revised Draft Text \(RDT\)](#) of the treaty, compiled by the Secretariat after the discussions at INC-3 as the basis for negotiations at INC-4, shows signs that global rules to end plastic pollution are at risk of being diluted. A host of weaker options, including for no-text (deletion) and for entirely voluntary actions, stand in the way of streamlining treaty texts for clear and specific binding global rules. These weaker options show a worst-case scenario of a treaty with no binding measures, only voluntary actions, focusing primarily on waste management and existing pollution. They are, however, not representative of the position of most states.

INC-3 interventions and submissions by states, vis-à-vis the options in the RDT, reveal an encouraging status on the support for global rules in the treaty. A clear majority of states agreed that most control measures included in the original Zero Draft should stay in the treaty, and the binding-global-rule should be the main approach to these measures:





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The high level of ambition across states reflects the general public sentiments across the globe: the growing plastic pollution crisis must be stopped, and it is high time that countries set a high common standard of action to address this challenge. In 2022, a [survey of people in 34 countries](#) showed that on average, 75% of people in different regions support a global ban on unnecessary single-use plastics (for most countries, the support ranges higher, at around 80-85%). 77% of people support a global ban on types of plastic that cannot be easily recycled, and 78% supported that manufacturers and retailers be made responsible for reducing, reusing and recycling their packaging.

The odds are well stacked in favour of the ambitious states in the negotiations in Ottawa this April. Not only are the building blocks to construct binding, global rules in the treaty still in place, but they also outcompete the weaker options included in the RDT, receiving broad support from both a clear majority of states and people across the world. The time is now for ambitious states to take advantage of this majority alignment, to advance the global rules' details at INC-4 and intersessionally. Accepting anything short of a legally binding treaty—and rules that ensure our future will be free from plastic pollution—is to fail the global majority who are ready for bold, new solutions to end plastic pollution.

PRIORITIES FOR INC-4 AND INTERSESSIONAL WORK

High-level commitment and strong political will from ambitious states are essential at INC-4 and beyond, to ensure that the negotiations advance on priority global rules, implementation assistance, and gradual strengthening mechanisms. The outcomes of INC-3 made it clear that ambition—even though supported by the popular mass—could fail if a minority is allowed to veto progress. Necessary actions to ensure a robust treaty, such as the organisation of intersessional workstreams, could again be blocked and delayed, if states do not firmly reject bad-faith obstructions.

Prioritisation of work will be key to the achievement of good outcomes at INC-4 and by the end of 2024. Significant technical details, including the criteria and lists of chemicals and polymers of concern, and of problematic and avoidable plastic products, as well as product design and performance requirements needs to be further elaborated. Treaty text on financing measures must be streamlined and offer a clear direction and practical solutions directly linked to enabling parties' compliance with the treaty's control measures. New additions in the RDT on financing mechanisms, and other measures related to implementation, have not yet offered clear direction on practical solutions directly linked to enabling parties' compliance with the treaty's control measures.

WWF calls on states to broaden the existing majority alignment, and speed up progress on priorities at INC-4 and during the intersessional period:

- Essential global rules in the treaty—including global bans, phased reductions, and requirements for product design and performance, [especially for the most polluting plastics](#) and associated chemicals;
- Necessary technical discussions on the assessment criteria and procedures for listing the most polluting plastics and associated chemicals that are subjected to the treaty's global rules;
- Specifying the setups of financing mechanisms and other means of implementation to effectively enable parties' compliance with specific control measures, and support a just transition, for the most vulnerable groups.

Lastly, WWF urges Ministers across the world, who have already spearheaded measures such as national bans on single-use plastics and circular economy regulations, to take an active lead in these workstreams of the treaty's negotiations and to specify concrete binding rules on bans and product design requirements at the global level.

Detailed recommendations for INC-4 will be published by the 3rd of April, on WWF's [plastic pollution treaty webpage](#).



or visit:

wwf.panda.org/plastic treaty

for information on the treaty negotiation, including timeline, reports and briefs to the INC process



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