



A defining moment in the fight against plastic pollution

ECOS recommendations for a strong UN Plastics Treaty

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Plastic pollution is a monumental challenge requiring a united global response. This November, world leaders and negotiators will convene in Busan, South Korea, for the fifth and final session of the UN Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-5) to forge a Global Plastics Treaty. This historic opportunity is a chance to confront plastic pollution at its root and protect human and environmental health.

For this treaty to succeed, **INC-5 negotiators must be bold, choosing long-term environmental gains over short-term economic interests**. ECOS has identified five critical elements that must be included to ensure the treaty's effectiveness. At the core, these **provisions should be binding at a global level**; without enforceable commitments, mismanaged plastic volumes are projected to double by 2040.

1. Reduce Plastic Production with Binding Targets

To combat the rapid escalation of plastic production, the treaty must set ambitious, science-based targets to reduce plastic production worldwide. Without curbing production, the costs of managing plastic pollution will soar, overwhelming current waste management systems and undermining other treaty efforts. [Global plastic production is projected to nearly triple by 2060](#) if left unchecked—an unsustainable trajectory.

A production reduction provision must include:

- **Binding global targets** for reducing plastic production or a time-bound target-setting process.

- **National targets** for each phase of the plastic lifecycle (production, reuse, recycling) with clear milestones.
- **Transparency and reporting** on the import and export of plastic materials, accessible through standardized databases.

2. Ban Harmful Plastics and Chemicals

Plastic products and chemicals that threaten human and environmental health must be globally banned or phased out. [Most countries support this](#), as it is essential for reducing plastic pollution and protecting public health. Chemicals of concern should be regulated across the entire lifecycle, not just their use in products. Limiting oversight to chemicals in products shifts responsibility onto manufacturing countries, which often depend on imported raw materials and lack essential information or control over material safety.

To achieve this, the treaty should include:

- **Global bans and phase-outs** for harmful plastics and chemicals of concerns with strict phase-out timelines.
- **Criteria** to classify problematic plastic products and chemicals of concern based on hazard data, and their potential risks to health, the environment, and circularity.
- **Initial lists of mandatory groups of chemicals and plastic products to be banned** along with a clear mechanism to update these lists as new scientific evidence emerges.
- **Mandatory transparency** of all chemicals used in plastic production, with information shared across the value chain through standardized labels and databases.

3. Design Products and Systems for a Safe, Circular Economy

Mandatory, harmonized design criteria are crucial for reducing plastic demand, eliminating toxic chemicals, supporting reuse, and improving recycling. [A large number of delegations support binding product design provisions](#), which are essential to creating a levelled playing field.

To enable a shift to a safe circular economy, the treaty must also set guidelines for infrastructure supporting reuse and refill systems, as products cannot circulate without these systems. While alternative plastics and substitutes can reduce plastic buildup, they are no cure-all; binding rules must ensure their sustainable use to avoid merely swapping single-use plastics for other environmentally costly materials.

The treaty must include:

- **Binding design standards** that promote sustainable sourcing, optimised and safe use, and high-quality recycling – see more details [here](#).
- **Mainstream and support infrastructure for reuse and refill systems** to make circularity viable.
- **Guidelines for evaluating alternative plastics** to prevent unintended consequences.

4. Make Transparency a Priority

Mandatory reporting is essential for tracking the progress of treaty implementation. Without comprehensive data on plastics and chemicals across their lifecycle, it will be impossible to assess compliance or environmental impact accurately. This data should be standardized and publicly accessible to ensure accountability.

The treaty should mandate:

- **Mandatory, standardized reporting** on chemicals, plastics, and materials throughout their lifecycle, matching treaty obligations.
- **Harmonized information systems** that provide public access to data on plastics and chemicals.

5. Ensure the Treaty is Adaptive and Can Evolve

For the treaty to stay effective, it must be adaptable to scientific advancements and emerging challenges. The annexes, which will list harmful chemicals and plastic products, as well as technical criteria to comply with treaty provisions, must be easily amended. Establishing a two-thirds majority voting rule for amendments, [as seen in successful agreements](#) like the Montreal Protocol, will allow the treaty to evolve efficiently while maintaining broad support.

To achieve this, the treaty should:

- **Mandate a two-thirds majority voting threshold** for annex amendments, after consensus efforts have been exhausted.
- **Include diverse stakeholders** in developing and amending annexes, ensuring balanced input from all sectors of society.