

Tuesday, 5 August 2025

**UN urged to protect the Global Plastics Treaty and multilateralism  
from the fossil fuel lobby**

*An open letter to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)*

**UNEP Executive Director Andersen,  
Executive Secretary of the INC Secretariat Mathur-Filipp,**

We are writing to you to express our serious concerns about the negative impact that fossil fuel and petrochemical industry lobbyists are having on Global Plastics Treaty negotiations - and to urge you to take action now to protect both this crucial treaty and multilateralism more broadly.

As you are well aware, the world is on the verge of agreeing a landmark Global Plastics Treaty. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to turn the tide on the plastic pollution crisis, and protect both our natural world and public health.

After two years of debate, the core elements that a Global Plastics Treaty must deliver are clear. It is well established that to properly address plastic pollution we need to tackle it throughout its full lifecycle - from production to waste - as originally mandated by UNEA. It is also widely supported that core to any credible treaty must be agreement on a roadmap to cut plastic production and 'turn off the plastic tap'. Indeed if we fail to turn off the tap, all our efforts further downstream will be in vain due to the flood of virgin plastic. Hence a treaty that fails to tackle production will be a treaty that has failed.

**The importance of the Treaty tackling production is widely recognised**

In Busan last November more than 100 countries reinforced the central importance of reducing plastic production - a message reiterated by the signing of the Nice Declaration at the UN Oceans Conference. Scientists working on the issue and the hundreds of civil society groups from across the world who make up the Break Free from Plastic network also cite addressing plastics production as the key to resolving plastic pollution. Business groups too, including the 500 signatories of Champions of Change business network and the Business Coalition for a Strong Plastics Treaty, are also calling for action to stem runaway plastic production.

**Despite this, whether the treaty process delivers a roadmap to cut production remains far from certain.** We contend that this is largely due to the powerful influence of lobbyists representing the interests of giant fossil fuel and petrochemical companies working to weaken the treaty's ambition - by opposing measures to address plastic production<sup>1</sup> and advocating an approach centred on recycling.

The presence of this lobby at Global Plastics Treaty meetings is well documented by the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL). Their research shows that at every treaty meeting since 2022, the number of fossil fuel company lobbyists has increased. Most recently at INC-5 a record 221 industry lobbyists were registered, making them the single largest delegation at the talks; more than the EU and its Member States combined. Lobbyists also outnumbered the delegates from the Scientists' Coalition for an Effective Plastics Treaty by three to one, and representatives from the Indigenous Peoples' Caucus by nearly nine to one.<sup>2</sup>

While aggressively lobbying for a weak treaty, these companies are investing heavily in [building yet more plastic production capacity](#). For instance since treaty talks began in 2022, seven of the major plastic producers - Dow, ExxonMobil, BASF, Chevron Phillips, Shell, SABIC and Ineos - have expanded their capacity to make new plastic by 1.4 million tonnes<sup>3</sup>. Estimates indicate that expansion of this kind, unless curbed by legislation, will lead to plastic production tripling by 2050<sup>4</sup>.

The fact that fossil fuel companies are making big profits from plastic production at the very same time as lobbying to weaken regulations to control plastic pollution represents a clear conflict of interest. For instance, since talks began, **Dow alone has earned an estimated \$5.1 billion from plastics**<sup>5</sup> – while sending at least 21 lobbyists to the treaty negotiations over the same period.

As the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights put it: “There is a fundamental and irreconcilable conflict between the interests of the plastics industry [...] and the human rights and policy interests of people affected by the plastics crisis.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [INEOS views on the UN Global Plastics Treaty](#)

<sup>2</sup> **CIEL (2024)**. ‘Fossil Fuel Lobbyists Flood Final Scheduled Round of Global Plastics Treaty Negotiations’ [www.ciel.org/news/inc-5-lobbyist-analysis/](http://www.ciel.org/news/inc-5-lobbyist-analysis/)

<sup>3</sup> Greenpeace UK analysis based on Wood Mackenzie data. Figures reflect capacity expansion from four of the companies with the highest registered lobbyist presence across INC1–INC5. Full methodology available in Appendix B.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/apr/18/plastic-production-emission-climate-crisis>

<sup>5</sup> Based on Dow's reported EBIT for its Packaging & Specialty Plastics segment (2023–2024).

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/climatechange/2022-12-01/OHCHR-inputs-INC1.pdf>

The financial interests of these companies, and a handful of member states, must not be allowed to override the interests of the wider world.

**Undermining multilateralism:** this lobbying by powerful industry interests is not just undermining the process of solving one of the world's most pressing problems, it also risks fundamentally undermining the public's faith in the UN and the collective action that is essential to resolving global problems.

We urge the INC Secretariat and UNEP to stand up and protect global cooperation. To create a reset to ensure that fossil fuel and petrochemical lobbyists are no longer allowed to dominate Global Plastics Treaty meetings - and use their wealth to skew the agenda away from the public interest for the sake of their continuing profits.

To ensure this once in a lifetime opportunity to resolve the global plastic pollution crisis is not fatally undermined we call on you to take the following steps:

**1. Ban fossil fuel and petrochemical lobbyists from all future Global Plastics Treaty negotiations and Conferences of the Parties**

The companies profiting from plastic pollution must not be allowed to shape the treaty meant to stop it. The UN should adopt clear rules excluding all fossil fuel and petrochemical industry actors – whether they are formal observers, industry representatives within national delegations or unofficial lobbyists – from all official plastics treaty spaces.

There is clear precedent for action to prevent conflict of interest. The World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control explicitly excludes tobacco industry representatives from policymaking recognising that their profit motive is incompatible with public health objectives.

**2. Protect official spaces at and around any future INCs and COP processes from fossil fuel and petrochemical industry influence.**

In 2021 the UK government took measures to ensure no Oil and Gas major sponsored COP26 or took [part in the Green Zone](#). The UN process should build on this example and protect all official spaces relating to the Global Plastics Treaty by revoking fossil fuel and petrochemical industry sponsorship and participation.

**3. Support members states embedding a strong conflict of interest policy in the treaty**

The treaty must include binding safeguards against undue influence. This should follow the model of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and apply across all plastics treaty bodies. As an immediate priority the INC must:

- Recognise the need to avoid influence from vested interests in the treaty's preamble.
- Delete from the treaty text any references that could embed the influence of the private sector in the treaty's implementation,
- Ensure a conflict of interest policy is urgently established for any scientific subsidiary body of the treaty that is established to identify which chemicals and products to regulate.

#### **4. Ensure meaningful public and scientific participation**

Finally, as well as acting to control the powerful petrochemical industry lobby, we call on you to prioritise giving seats at the table to impacted communities and Indigenous Peoples who live on the frontlines of plastic pollution - and to the independent scientists studying the impacts plastic pollution is having on our planet and our health.

This would be in line with the UN General Assembly's Resolution 76/300 that says it is a human right to have a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. It would also uphold rights enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) to ensure the participation of Indigenous Peoples in decision-making matters. Ensuring the voices of independent scientists are heard would also help to ensure our [right to science](#) and support the treaty mandate summarised in [Resolution 5/14](#) that negotiations must rely on the best available science.

We believe that the momentum for a meaningful agreement has never been stronger. We urge you to ensure that the UN seizes this moment and proves that amidst the ever-widening political divide and growing uncertainty - multilateralism, when protected from the influence of big business, can still deliver

Yours,

Graham Forbes, Greenpeace Head of Delegation to the Global Plastics Treaty negotiations and Global Campaign Lead, Plastic-Free-Future at Greenpeace US

David Azoulay — CIEL Senior Attorney, Director of Environmental Health program, head of CIEL's delegation at the INC-5