

Towards an international treaty on plastic pollution: issues, options, negotiating positions

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With 81% of plastic products ending up as waste in less than a year and with plastic production expected to double by 2050, plastic pollution is a growing global problem that requires an urgent international response. Against this backdrop, the United Nations Environment Assembly adopted a landmark resolution in March 2022, which paved the way for negotiating a global treaty to bring an end to plastic pollution.

By addressing this issue, the ESEC wishes to give organised civil society a voice in these negotiations by setting out the conditions for a Treaty that is ambitious in its objectives and effective because it is legally binding.



400m
tonnes

In 2019, the OECD estimated that for every 460 million tonnes of plastic produced, 353 million tonnes became waste.

QUESTION

WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS FOR ADDRESSING THE GLOBAL PLASTIC POLLUTION CRISIS?

To address the global problem of plastic pollution, the ESEC is calling for an ambitious international response, combined with national action plans.

The ESEC's opinion is based on a detailed assessment of plastic pollution worldwide and makes proposals to stop the leakage of plastic into the environment, covering the entire life cycle of plastics, including its production, use and disposal.

The ESEC is also interested in the conditions for the effectiveness of an international treaty and makes recommendations in this respect.

Without putting plastics on trial, the ESEC calls for the elimination of certain plastics and for ambitious trajectories to reduce their production and consumption in developed countries.

Finally, this opinion focuses on the human health impacts of plastics and points out that there are too few scientific studies on the subject.

The ESEC's recommendations, which include all stakeholders from civil society to business, aim to end plastic pollution by 2040.

An ambitious international treaty to combat plastic pollution

OPINION

1 AGREE ON SPECIFIC TARGETS IN THE TREATY

- Set an ambitious international target to eliminate plastic pollution from all environments by 2040.
- Integrate the notion of a 'plastic footprint' in the draft Treaty, which will make it possible to assess the real impact of plastic products on the environment throughout their life cycle.
- Include **a ban in principle on single-use plastics by 2040** in the Treaty.
- In an annex to the Treaty, provide **a list of the most toxic and harmful additive groups for health and the environment.**

2 ENSURE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE TREATY

- Use a specific convention for the international treaty with technical annexes. This type of text will make it possible to agree on precise objectives within the Treaty and allow it to evolve in a flexible way thanks to its technical annexes.
- Place scientific research at the heart of the governance of the Treaty in order to base decisions on objective, harmonised and shared data.

3 INVOLVE CIVIL SOCIETY AND OBTAIN THE NECESSARY FUNDING FOR THE TRANSITION, THE TERRITORIES AND THE MOST VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

- Involve organised civil society in the second meeting of the International Negotiating Committee in Paris in June 2023, by organising a side event to enable civil society to present its recommendations.
- Implement an ad hoc fund, based on the model of the Montreal Protocol's Multilateral Fund, and encourage States to define a financial trajectory up to 2060 in order to safeguard the financial efforts that they are willing to make in this area. States' contributions could be calculated on the basis of their annual plastic use.
- Include Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and the polluter pays principle in the future Treaty. This tool is particularly well-suited to the management of plastics and makes the entire sector responsible. The implementation of such a system in developing countries will require specific support.

THE RAPPORTEURS

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