

Annex A - Tearfund's Response to UNEA Resolution 5/14: 'End plastic pollution: Towards an international legally binding instrument'

Text ¹	Reference	Tearfund's Response
The resolution recognises that 'plastic pollution represent[s] a serious environmental problem at a global scale, negatively impacting the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development'.	Preamble	Tearfund works with local partners and grassroots organisations in more than 50 of the world's poorest countries, and it is clear that plastic pollution is hitting the world's poorest people the hardest, pushing more people further into poverty. Plastic pollution has a direct impact on over half of the SDGs; they simply won't be met without tackling this crisis.
The resolution recognises 'the urgent need [...] to take immediate action towards the long term elimination of plastic pollution in marine and other environments, and to avoid detriment from plastic pollution to ecosystems and the human activities dependent on them'.	Preamble	<p>Plastic pollution is damaging livelihoods and curtailing economic growth in low- and middle-income countries. It is damaging agricultural and fishing livelihoods and represents a serious threat to livelihoods related to tourism. By substantially reducing the amount of single-use plastics generated, and ensuring that the remaining plastic is collected and recycled appropriately and responsibly, the treaty can achieve its ambitions in this area.</p> <p>We are encouraged that this resolution covers the full life cycle of plastic, recognising that all marine plastic begins life on the land. According to the UN's own principles, the treaty must leave no one behind,² and must recognise the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.³</p>
The resolution recognises the impact of plastic pollution on human health, reaffirming 'the importance of cooperation, coordination and complementarity among relevant regional and international conventions and instruments [...] to prevent plastic pollution and its related risks to human health and adverse effects on human wellbeing and the environment'.	Preamble	We are encouraged by this recognition of the impacts of plastic pollution on people's health and wellbeing. We firmly believe that this is a highly 'relevant' aspect (see paragraph 4h) which must be addressed by the treaty.

1 United Nations Environment Programme (2022) 'UNEA Resolution 5/14 entitled "End plastic pollution: Towards an international legally binding instrument"' https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/39812/OEWG_PP_1_INF_1_UNEA%20resolution.pdf

2 'As we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind. Recognizing that the dignity of the human person is fundamental, we wish to see the goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society. And we will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first' (from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development). The resolution, 'End plastic pollution: Towards an international legally binding instrument', reaffirms the United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, by which the United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

3 United Nations (2022) 'UN General Assembly declares access to clean and healthy environment a universal human right', United Nations News, 28 July <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/07/1123482>

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<p>The resolution recognises the 'significant contribution made by workers under informal and cooperative settings to the collecting, sorting and recycling of plastics in many countries'.</p>	<p>Preamble</p>	<p>We are encouraged by this recognition of the role of waste pickers, who are the backbone of the collection and recycling system in many contexts. The treaty must put in place measures to protect their human rights and deliver improvements in their livelihoods. Meanwhile, the Secretariat and the Bureau of the International Negotiating Committee (INC) must work with donor states to make their meaningful and fair participation a reality.</p>
<p>The resolution acknowledges that some legal obligations arising from the instrument will 'require capacity-building and technical and financial assistance in order to be effectively implemented by developing countries and countries with economies in transition'.</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>Many low- and middle-income countries and key stakeholders lack the means and mechanisms to support the implementation of the instrument. These are countries where the impacts of plastic pollution are being felt hardest and which are the least equipped to deal with the consequences. Tailored support is therefore essential to the achievement of the treaty ambitions in these locations, including through a dedicated multilateral fund.</p>
<p>The resolution requests the INC to include in the instrument provisions 'to promote sustainable production and consumption of plastics through [...] product design and environmentally sound waste management, including through resource efficiency and circular economy approaches'.</p>	<p>3b</p>	<p>Waste management should not only be environmentally but also socially sound, protecting the human rights of workers in the informal sector.</p> <p>But however good a waste management system is, it is only addressing the symptom rather than the cause. The treaty must put in place legally binding targets to substantially reduce the amount of single-use plastics generated, prioritising alternative product delivery systems such as reuse and refill, and to ensure that the remaining plastic is collected and recycled appropriately and responsibly.</p>
<p>The resolution requests the INC to include provisions 'to promote national action plans to work towards the prevention, reduction and elimination of plastic pollution'.</p>	<p>3e</p>	<p>The solution to the problem of plastic pollution will not look the same for everyone. The treaty must have the necessary flexibility to allow national governments to make the right decisions for their country in their National Action Plans. However, it must not leave any room for governments (or companies) to renege on promises, miss targets or avoid the consequences of doing so.</p>

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The resolution requests the INC to 'specify arrangements for capacity-building and technical assistance, technology transfer on mutually agreed terms, and financial assistance, recognizing that the effective implementation of some legal obligations under the instrument will depend on the availability of capacity-building and adequate financial and technical assistance'.	3n	Adequate provision must be made to support low- and middle-income countries, as well as key stakeholders (including waste pickers), to establish, expand and improve solid waste management systems, to build capacity for a just transition, and to ensure that they can meet the obligations of the agreement. Getting these aspects of the treaty right will be essential to achieving its ambitions in low- and middle-income countries.
The resolution decides that the INC is to consider the need for a financial mechanism 'to support the implementation of the instrument, including the option of a dedicated multilateral fund'.	4b	Many low- and middle-income countries and key stakeholders, such as waste pickers, lack the financial means and mechanisms to support the implementation of the instrument. These are countries where the impacts of plastic pollution are being felt hardest and which are the least equipped to deal with the consequences. A dedicated multilateral fund is therefore essential to the achievement of the treaty ambitions in these locations.
The resolution asks the INC to consider 'lessons learned and best practices, including those from informal cooperative settings'.	4e	The informal waste sector plays a vital role in the collecting and sorting of plastic for recycling. Despite the challenges they face, waste pickers have shown incredible entrepreneurship, resilience and ingenuity in their work. The INC must listen to and take account of the huge amount of experience and expertise they have to offer to this process.
The resolution requests that the INC consider 'any other aspects that [they] may consider relevant'.	4h	We firmly believe that the impacts of plastic pollution which we have highlighted in this paper are highly 'relevant' aspects which must be addressed by the treaty.

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