



Agenda item 4 - OHCHR Statement to the second session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment (INC2)

May 2023

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Thank you Chair. I speak on behalf of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

For far too long plastic has only been seen as a waste problem. Plastics are not only in our landfills, but they are also in our oceans, in our farmlands, and in our bodies.

Systemic change is necessary to stop the flow of plastic waste into the environment. Pollution prevention and reduction is one of the most effective remedies to tackle the plastic crisis.

Bearing in mind that the whole cycle of plastics, at its various stages, has become a global threat to human rights, it is key that the new plastics treaty respects, protects and fulfils human rights, including the human rights to health and to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

In concrete, this means that the Treaty should:

- 1- Explicitly refer to human rights, including the rights to health and to a healthy environment within its objectives as a matter of obligation, policy coherence, and effectiveness.
- 2- Be guided by key principles including non-discrimination, transparency, accountability, prevention, precaution and intergenerational equity.
- 3- Ensure the right to all people to enjoy the benefits of science and the need for safeguards to ensure the science is independent.
- 4- Guarantee all people the rights to participation, access to information and access to justice in environmental matters, particularly for individuals, groups and people in vulnerable situations, including children, women, Indigenous

Peoples, frontline communities and workers at heightened risk of occupational exposure, including waste pickers.

5- Reinforce the corporate responsibility to respect human rights in the context of plastics (in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights). Profit and other vested interests should never come at the expense of human rights.

6- Ensure that alternatives to plastics are assessed regarding their implications for human rights and the environment. This would guarantee that alternatives are not misleading, short sighted and do not lead to further harm.

7- Achieve a just transition. We need a treaty that leaves no one behind, creates new opportunities for decent work, and helps to reduce inequalities – not deepen it.

We need an ambitious treaty with obligations and strict controls, such as overall reduction in the supply of plastics, to enable a safe circular economy that is toxic-free and respects, protects and fulfils human rights.

I thank you.