

## **Key Messages to the Second Session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution (INC-2)**

By the organised constituency of Local and Regional Governments

We, mayors and representatives of local and regional governments of the world, gathered in the organised constituency of the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, have come to Paris, host city of the second session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, to assert our commitment and reaffirm the crucial role of the local and regional level in holistically addressing the plastic pollution crisis through a circular economy approach. Plastic is devastating our ecosystems and species, putting at risk ecosystem services and common goods such as freshwater supply, life systems and clean air. It aggravates the climate crisis by mostly being based on the extraction of fossil fuels. Microplastics are accumulating all over the planet and are now finding their way into our human bloodstreams and food systems, thus representing a serious threat to human health.

Our constituency has turned the spotlight on the importance of the urban-rural continuum, observing the interconnections among our cities and broader territories, particularly in their constant flow of goods, services and resources. We highlight the critical role of our local and regional governments, especially intermediary cities and small towns, to contribute to a sustainable development model that will address plastic pollution.

We, mayors and representatives of local and regional governments from around the world, are at the frontlines of the plastics crisis, tasked with addressing the consequences of plastic pollution and a linear economy, which burdens basic services of health and waste management. We are committed to pursuing the necessary global ecological transition, and are taking a stand against plastic pollution and implementing what we can on the ground through single-use plastics bans, improved waste collection, and the promotion of reuse. But we cannot do it alone, plastic waste is a global problem that requires globally integrated solutions for all actors in the value chain, including local and regional governments. The New Urban Agenda, the SDGs, the Sendai Framework, the Basel convention, the Paris Agreement, and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework interplay and their successful realisation require coordinated efforts at all levels.

The development of a global treaty is a golden opportunity to tackle this pressing challenge. For it to be successful, it needs to reflect the needs of all levels of governance. As the governmental level responsible for the provision of many important services, we have firsthand expertise on the dynamics that will benefit the negotiations, this should not be discarded when formulating solutions and responses to the plastics challenge. During the negotiation process, a dedicated and formal space must be reserved for local and regional governments as well as for the different components of civil society.

To this extent, as mayors, representatives of local and regional governments, their associations and networks, under an organised constituency through the Global Taskforce, we put forward the following points that need to be taken into account and will greatly contribute to the development of a comprehensive and legally binding final instrument to end plastic pollution:

## **1. CONSISTENCY: Establish clear and globally accepted definitions of the challenges and solutions**

Local and regional governments call for clarification and precision in the terminology used in the text of the international plastics treaty. While some definitions are outlined, they remain insufficient or inconsistent across countries. As key terms such as "plastics", "recyclable" or "recycled" remain undefined, this could greatly alter the scope and impact of the final text. Shared definitions of "circular" and "circular economy" as it relates to plastic pollution should also be agreed on.

Further, the treaty needs to ensure that a circular economy approach, using a life cycle analysis (with added indicators on threats to biodiversity and the impact on human health) to address the full life cycle of plastics is adopted throughout all measures.

## **2. REDUCTION: Set common targets and an operational timetable to achieve them**

With the production of plastic projected to increase threefold in the next forty years, an international treaty without clear targets for limiting production is simply not credible. Local and regional governments are calling for a clearly quantified reduction target with an operational timetable. It must concern both the upstream part of the value chain by setting targets for reducing the production of problematic and unnecessary products and virgin plastics, through promoting redesign, reuse and the use of recycled material. Furthermore, it should also include a list of easily avoided or substitutable single-use plastics as well as problematic polymers and additives to be eliminated.

### **3. REUSE: Promoting combined eco-design and regulatory approaches to increase service lives**

Local and regional governments are inviting negotiators to establish conditions for an increase in guaranteed product lifetimes for the user. The use of combined approaches of eco-design and regulatory supervision should be leveraged to achieve this goal, including global product design requirements. To support the establishment and economic viability of universally accessible reuse systems, for example for packaging, additional measures such as taxes or levies should be included.

### **4. RECYCLING: integrating an assessment of environmental benefits and risks**

Local and regional governments emphasise that the recycling strategy to be adopted must include an independent scientific assessment of the environmental benefits and risks of recycling. This approach should take into account inherent difficulties in recycling artificial polymers and the complex mixture of chemicals in plastic products, as well as differences in local conditions and their impact on comparability of data. It should be emphasised that recycling must be considered as one of the last elements to sustainably address the plastics challenges, systemic interventions at the redesign and rethink phase should remain the priority.

Local and regional governments stress that global requirements on designs and standards are necessary to ensure the enablement of reuse, recycling and circular interventions in general. For instance rules on labelling, traceability, minimum recycled content and product design requirements.

### **5. STRENGTHENING THE MANAGEMENT OF WASTE:**

The capacity of local and regional governments in building sustainable and circular waste management models needs to be enhanced, through direct enabling support from national governments. Particularly, the environmentally sound management and disposal of plastic waste need to be strengthened to be sure that plastic waste is safely managed. Local and regional governments are inviting states to include measures to improve waste management, such as restrictions on disposal methods for certain plastic waste, to minimise pollution.

## **6. FINANCING: Agreed options and mechanisms for the financing of interventions needs to be made available**

There are many competing priorities that local and regional governments are mandated to deliver on. This results in a situation where existing resources are spread too thin, and this is amplified in least developed and developing countries. The same is most likely true for other constituencies. We strongly call for a concerted effort to establish financing mechanisms that will fund ambitious and scalable solutions and infrastructures, and for national governments to allocate dedicated budgets for local and regional governments.

Innovative initiatives are further needed to promote and enhance entrepreneurship.

## **7. ACCOUNTABILITY: Extend uptake of the producer responsibility principle globally**

It is imperative to address the issue of financial responsibility for end-of-life plastic treatment costs, especially for cities where the principle of extended producer responsibility is not applied. Local and regional governments invite the negotiators to explore the idea of a globalised and locally responsive ambitious model of extended producer responsibility while taking into account the entire costs of collection, sorting, and treatment of all waste, including litter.

## **8. INTEGRATION: Linking the future treaty with existing international texts**

Concerned with the future of humankind, local and regional governments stand for a strong multilateral system that would raise the ambition of an international legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution. The circular economy offers a holistic approach to address plastics and should be incorporated throughout the treaty.

To ensure integration, negotiations should not overlook the linkage of the Treaty with existing texts such as the New Urban Agenda, the SDGs, the Sendai Framework, the Paris Agreement, and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. In addition, trade agreements and the Basel Convention should also be considered, the latter of which contains certain elements of a response to the treatment of plastic waste.

Furthermore, the treaty should carefully identify stakeholders and the critical roles that they could play in reducing and eliminating plastic pollution. Developing a multi-stakeholder, multi-level governance vision that ensures public participation for an equitable and just ecological transition is imperative.

## **9. INCLUSIVITY AND EQUITY: Making sure all action is accessible and ensuring a just transition**

Considering their proximity to citizens, local and regional governments can facilitate the collaboration with communities and stakeholders in processes of co-creation to define common actions. The views of different communities such as people with disabilities, indigenous communities or low-income communities should be included into the negotiation process to make sure solutions are inclusive and equitable. As a result, public participation should be a basic right, not a privilege and 'nice to have'. To ensure a just transition for workers that leaves no one behind, the reskilling and upskilling of workers to enable the transition to a circular economy and capacity for redesign, reuse and recycling measures should be given consideration. In addition, informal waste pickers contribute to decreasing plastic pollution by improving municipal solid waste management. Any formalisation needs to consider first and foremost the safety of workers. A just transition means that the transition to sustainable production and consumption of plastic is designed in a manner that is as fair, inclusive, and equitable to the informal sector, generating and preserving decent work opportunities.

## **10. MONITORING: Encourage states to produce monitoring reports on the commercialization of plastic materials**

Local and regional governments see the future Treaty ensuring that states follow a global monitoring report, not only on waste treatment, but also on industry data, in the form of a mandatory declaration registry, for example. This tool would allow for better knowledge of the volumes and types of plastics as well as the sectors and uses most affected. It would make it possible to identify, for example, the most problematic uses of polymers and additives, or to evaluate, through comparison with recycling figures, and reduction commitments, the relevance and effectiveness of the sectors. It will also enable a global evaluation of the economic and social impacts of an ecological transition to a world with low or zero plastic pollution, and enable the digitization of a circular economy fostering reuse and repurposing of materials.

In view of the next generation of multilateralism, we emphasise the importance of including local and regional governments at the table of global negotiations. In this regard, we welcome the organisation of the first International Forum to End Plastic Pollution in Cities, convened by the City of Paris, and the organisation of official side events to the negotiations and we call for a raised ambition in the inclusion of local and regional governments in the negotiations.

It is also encouraging to witness the increasing acknowledgement of the importance of local and regional governments, most recently 2030 G7 Ministers of Climate, Energy

and the Environment Communiqué, which announces a G7 Roundtable on Subnational Climate Action together with U7.

The positive impact that local and regional governments can have, and the interventions that can be delivered at a sub-national level must be included and considered in any final binding agreement. Local and regional governments are already putting forward ambitious initiatives with positive impacts on tackling the plastics crisis, but cities won't be able to scale-up their efforts alone without the strong commitments of national governments in the final agreement. Appropriate support and funding mechanisms for city interventions to support a just and equitable ecological transition away from plastic pollution and to address the already existing negative impacts should be incorporated into national plans and into the final legally binding agreement on plastics.

