



IPEN (International Pollutants Elimination Network): Quick Views On The Fifth Session Of The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee To Develop An International Legally Binding Instrument On Plastic Pollution

(The [fifth session \(INC-5\)](#) is scheduled for 25 November to 1 December 2024 in Busan, Republic of Korea)

Summary

The **IPEN Quick Views on the Fifth Session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-5)** report focuses on key considerations for developing a legally binding global treaty to combat plastic pollution. Its main driver focusses and points are cited below:

1. **Human and Environmental Health Risks:** IPEN emphasises the urgent need to address the health and environmental harms caused by plastics, particularly from toxic chemicals used during their production, use, and disposal. This includes issues related to endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs) and persistent pollutants like microplastics.
2. **Plastics Across Their Life Cycle:** The report advocates for a treaty that regulates plastics across their entire life cycle, from production to disposal, rather than focusing solely on waste management. This approach seeks to minimise production and reduce dependency on harmful additives.
3. **Toxic Chemical Management:** The treaty should include measures for phasing out harmful chemical additives and polymers, especially those that pose significant risks to human health, wildlife, and ecosystems. IPEN highlights the necessity of prioritising the regulation of substances of concern.
4. **Global Equity and Justice:** IPEN stresses the importance of equitable solutions that support low- and middle-income countries. This includes financial and technical assistance for these nations to transition to sustainable alternatives and reduce plastic dependence.
5. **Cultural and Local Adaptations:** It underlines the need for culturally and regionally tailored approaches, recognising that communities worldwide face different challenges and opportunities when addressing plastic pollution.
6. **Ambitious Commitments:** The report urges negotiators to adopt strong, enforceable measures to reduce plastic production and pollution. It warns against voluntary or weak commitments that would fail to achieve meaningful progress.
7. **Stakeholder Collaboration:** IPEN calls for greater transparency and collaboration with civil society groups, scientists, and affected communities to ensure the treaty's provisions are science-based and widely supported.

Comment

While the IPEN report focus on critical aspects of plastic pollution and treaty considerations, several potential areas for future exploration or development were not explicitly addressed in the report. These include:

Innovation and Circular Economy:

- Encouraging research into biodegradable plastics and truly sustainable alternatives.
- Developing global standards for recycling infrastructure to support a circular economy.
- Incentivising businesses to adopt closed-loop systems that minimise waste.

Marine Plastics Beyond Pollution:

- Addressing the broader ecological impacts of plastics on marine biodiversity, including the disruption of marine food chains.
- Incorporating strategies for mitigating deep-sea plastic pollution, an area that remains under-researched.

Plastics and Climate Change:

- Examining the links between plastic production, greenhouse gas emissions, and climate change, particularly the carbon footprint of petrochemical industries.
- Promoting renewable energy use in plastic production facilities to reduce emissions.

Health Impact Assessment Tools:

- Developing and integrating comprehensive tools for assessing the health impacts of plastic-associated chemicals over time.
- Studying long-term exposure to micro-plastics and their interactions with human endocrine systems and cancer pathways.

Trade and Global Governance of Plastics:

- Addressing international trade in plastic waste and the risks of illegal dumping in low-income countries.
- Harmonising trade policies to support global reductions in plastic production and use.

Educational and Behavioural Interventions:

- Launching global education campaigns on the harmful impacts of plastics and promoting behavioural change towards reduced use.
- Incorporating plastic reduction strategies into school curricula to foster future generations of informed citizens.

Monitoring and Accountability:

- Establishing mechanisms for monitoring treaty compliance and the effectiveness of its provisions.
- Introducing global penalties for non-compliance to ensure enforcement.

Impact on Indigenous and Vulnerable Communities:

- Including provisions to address the disproportionate impacts of plastic pollution on Indigenous and marginalised communities, particularly in regions with high waste burdens.
- Encouraging culturally appropriate solutions that respect traditional ecological knowledge.

Addressing these areas structurally and at national level could significantly enhance the comprehensiveness and impact of global strategies to combat plastic pollution. Integrating them into future iterations of the treaty or supplementary agreements would further strengthen international efforts of which Australia must play a significant role in preserving our fragile ecosystem.

(Summarised by Georgy Hadwen, HOPE researcher Qld)