



Children and Youth Priorities for INC-5

Children and Major Group to UNEP (CYMG)

Plastics have infiltrated every facet of our existence, from the depths of our oceans to the air we breathe. This pervasive pollution, driven by fossil fuel dependence, reckless release of microplastics, and hazardous chemicals, has escalated into an unprecedented global crisis, endangering ecosystems, biodiversity, climate, and human health

The [Children and Youth Major Group to UNEP \(CYMG\)](#) emphasizes the urgent need for an International Legally Binding Instrument to confront the plastic pandemic that:

- Comprehensively addresses the full lifecycle of plastics;
- Brings justice to affected communities;
- Safeguards and restores the environment for current and future generations.

Here are ten key youth priorities and proposals for the negotiations at INC-5:

1. Scope Encompassing the Full Life Cycle of Plastics, Building on UNEA Resolution 5/14

Adopt a comprehensive, systems-wide approach that addresses the entire lifecycle of plastics, spanning upstream activities such as the extraction of raw materials and production of primary plastic polymers; midstream activities such as product design, reduction of plastic use, and the promotion of reuse, refill, and alternative delivery systems; and downstream activities such as environmentally sound waste management and disposal.

Additionally, address legacy plastics pollution through retrieval and remediation efforts, particularly in vulnerable environments. This approach must move beyond framing the global plastics crisis merely as a waste management or a littering issue; a paradigm shift is needed, with priority given to upstream interventions, including reducing plastic production and design for durability, reuse, and repair.

Reducing reliance on downstream measures like recycling, which proves insufficient, will ensure systemic change and ending plastic pollution while facilitating the development of sustainable production and consumption.

2. Reduction of primary plastic polymers: ban, phase out and/or restrict problematic, avoidable and unnecessary plastic products

Establish time-bound, progressive, and binding targets to systematically reduce the production of primary plastic polymers, with a particular focus on curtailing upstream activities such as

fossil fuel extraction and the overconsumption of feedstocks in line with the principles of intergenerational equity.

Incorporate provisions to eliminate all direct and indirect subsidies, tax breaks, and financial incentives that support polymer production and plastic manufacturing. Removing market distortions will reduce overproduction and align plastic production with the mitigation goals of the Paris Agreement, addressing the nexus between plastic production and climate change. Establish mechanisms for transparent and periodic reporting on national progress towards reducing primary plastic polymer production.

Develop criteria to identify a list of problematic, avoidable, and unnecessary plastic products and impose control measures to ban, phase out, and/or restrict its manufacture, trade, and use considering their environmental, health, and social impacts. Ban and phase out intentionally added microplastics and nanoplastics in plastic products and mandate redesign of plastic products to eliminate unintentional release of microplastics and nanoplastics.

3. Addressing toxicity of plastics: Chemicals of Concern

Implement a hazard-based approach to identify chemicals of concern and groups of chemicals of concern present in plastics throughout its lifecycle which cause detrimental impacts to human, animal, marine, and environmental health.

Where scientific evidence is not yet conclusive in determining the criteria, precautionary principle should be applied. The International Legally Binding Instrument (ILBI) must be complementary to the Global Framework on Chemicals, the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions address unregulated chemicals, and ensure transparency in disclosing chemical compositions across the plastic supply chain.

Establish a Chemicals Review Committee which regularly consults with the science policy body in determining the criteria and and periodically updating the list of groups of chemicals.

Impose global control measures such as ban, phase out, and/or restriction of manufacture, distribution, trade, and use of the listed chemicals of concern. Transparent disclosure of the supply, sale, and use of these chemicals should also be mandated.

4. Explicit references to human rights and commitment to a just transition

Acknowledge and address the social, economic, and environmental impacts of plastic pollution at every stage of its lifecycle which disproportionately affects certain sections of the population more than the others. Ensure an equitable and just transition for those dependent on plastics and affected by plastic pollution throughout its lifecycle, including creating opportunities for green jobs, fair wages, safe working conditions, and better health. This transition must protect and advance the realization of human rights, and the SDGs, including the right to health, the right

to access to information, the right to livelihood, the right to access effective remedies for harms caused by plastic pollution, and the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. The human rights of all individuals and communities, especially Indigenous peoples, children and youth, women, and frontline and marginalized communities disproportionately impacted by plastic pollution, must be considered at every stage of the plastics life cycle.

5. Inclusion of Specific Measures for Nature, Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health

Recognize the intricate connection between plastic pollution, biodiversity loss, and the degradation of ecosystems at the global, national, and regional levels as highlighted by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services (IPBES) report¹ in combating the triple planetary crisis in the final text of ILBI. Ensure that the ILBI supports the use of nature-positive measures as a catalyst for innovation and the promotion of sustainable production and consumption patterns that synergistically enhance biodiversity, human health, and the universal right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. Support the implementation of the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF)², especially Target 7 which emphasizes the reduction of pollution risks and the negative impact of pollution from all sources by 2030, to levels that are not harmful to biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, considering cumulative effects.

6. Integrating Best Available Science with Indigenous and Local Knowledge

The ILBI provisions should be developed by integrating the best available scientific research with Indigenous and local knowledge. This requires significant investment in science, research, and development to better understand the impacts of plastic pollution on both human health and the environment. Additionally, prioritizing research into sustainable non-plastic alternatives and improving land and waste management infrastructure challenges .. This includes promoting open data sharing and establishing a scientific and technical body that includes sectoral expertise and is free from conflicts of interest.

Furthermore, it should consolidate Indigenous and local knowledge and value systems to enrich the scientific approach, including by providing alternative worldviews in approaching plastic pollution research and solutions and highlighting traditional solutions that have a long-standing history of effectiveness in sustainability and waste management.

7. Non-Plastic Substitutes and Sustainable Alternatives

¹ IPBES, Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (2019).

² [KMGBF](#) Target 7(c) Reduce pollution risks and the negative impact of pollution from all sources by 2030, to levels that are not harmful to biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, considering cumulative effects, including by preventing, reducing, and working towards eliminating plastic pollution.

Encourage the development and adoption of safe, sustainable, and environmentally sound non-plastic substitutes grounded in scientific research and Indigenous and local knowledge systems. Implement and scale up reuse, refill, and alternative product delivery systems using the best available practices, certification methods, transparent eco-labelling, and Indigenous and local knowledge with free, prior, and informed consent. Assessment criteria for alternatives and substitutes should be rooted in the principles of prevention and precaution and aligned with a toxic-free, zero-waste hierarchy and should consider the entire lifecycle of products and materials.

Public awareness and consumer education are crucial in driving demand for these sustainable alternatives, empowering individuals and communities to make informed choices. Additionally, providing financial incentives, subsidies, and investment in research and innovation can help accelerate the development and adoption of non-plastic substitutes, making them more accessible and affordable to producers and consumers. Adequate policy efforts must be taken to prevent false, misleading claims where alternative plastics such as bio-based plastics are portrayed as non-plastic substitutes amounting to greenwashing.

8. Traceable Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and waste management provisions

Implement eco-modulated EPR schemes for a large range of products to ensure progressive reductions in virgin plastic production. Hold producers accountable for plastic waste throughout its lifecycle based on the zero waste hierarchy and the polluter pays principle, including measures to incentivise reusability and repair while combating littering and other environmental impacts. Mandate financial contributions from the private sector to deter the production of primary plastics and promote eco-design of products and sustainable waste management strategies.

Acknowledging the contribution of waste pickers and ensuring their human rights to health, dignity, and safety should be a crucial consideration in this provision. Financial flows and subsidies to polluting waste management technologies such as incineration, waste to energy/fuel, co-processing, chemical recycling, etc should be disincentive. Adequate funding and transfer of environmentally sound technology to improve waste management infrastructure and the capacity of various levels of government must be prioritized.

9. Financing and Capacity Building

Strategize to harness both public and private sources at national and global levels, utilizing a combination of fiscal tools and market-based instruments, such as plastic pollution taxes, fines, and targeted financial donations from the private sector while upholding the Polluter-Pays-Principle (with exceptions for SMEs and small-scale producers), and implementing a plastic pollution tax on virgin plastic polymer and product producers with a mandatory plastic disclosure for companies. Multiple dedicated funds could be established to ensure effective

implementation, including a trust fund for treaty administration, a fund under the existing Global Environment Facility (GEF) to address hazardous chemicals and waste management, and a new standalone fund to support the promotion of eco-friendly plastic alternatives, all guided by principles of equity, sustainability, and transparency.

Set up dedicated financial mechanisms for youth-led waste management innovations, ensuring that young people have access to grants, loans, and investments to create sustainable waste solutions, with special emphasis on community-driven projects. Prioritize capacity-building programs that equip workers in the waste management sector, especially informal waste pickers, with skills and resources to transition to safer, more sustainable jobs in the green economy.

10. Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement and Inclusivity

Support and facilitate meaningful and inclusive participation of various stakeholders, such as children, youth, women, Indigenous People, local communities, workers across the plastics supply chain, especially informal waste pickers, and other groups in vulnerable situations at all levels of the ILBI processes. Incorporate the principles of intergenerational equity to ensure the ILBI reflects the ambition to create fairness and justice in the developmental and environmental needs of the current and future generations. Admission and participation of civil society in the future instrument should align with stakeholder constituencies, ensuring inclusivity at every step. The treaty must enshrine mechanisms for free, active, and informed participation, guaranteeing that diverse voices can shape the decision-making processes. This includes establishing clear guidelines on Conflicts of Interest (COI) policy to safeguard against undue influence from the plastics, fossil fuel, and chemical industries. Moreover, the ILBI should prioritize universal access to education and awareness programs on plastic pollution, fostering a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach that actively involves and empowers children and youth as informed stakeholders in addressing challenges at all levels.

About CYMG to UNEP

The Children and Youth Major Group (CYMG) is a globally recognized umbrella mechanism representing youth networks, organizations and individuals committed to addressing the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

Find more: www.cymgenv.net/about