

# Global plastic treaty

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### Context

Representatives from over 170 countries are gathering in Busan, South Korea, to negotiate a legally binding global treaty aimed at ending plastic pollution, including marine pollution.

### Background

- **Milestone Talks:** This is the fifth and final round of discussions initiated in 2022 after the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) resolved to develop a treaty by the end of 2024.
- **Rising Plastic Production:** Global plastic production doubled from 234 million tonnes in 2000 to 460 million tonnes in 2019, with Asia producing nearly half, followed by North America (19%) and Europe (15%). The OECD estimates this figure will reach 700 million tonnes by 2040.
- **Environmental Impact:** Plastic takes 20-500 years to decompose, and less than 10% has been recycled to date. Much of the waste leaks into ecosystems, breaking down into harmful microplastics and nanoplastics.
- **Health Hazards:** Exposure to chemicals in plastics is linked to cancer, diabetes, reproductive disorders, and neurodevelopmental impairments.
- **Ecosystem Damage:** Plastic pollution severely affects marine, freshwater, and terrestrial species.
- **Climate Change Contributor:** In 2020, plastics accounted for 3.6% of global greenhouse gas emissions, with 90% arising from fossil-fuel-based production and 10% from waste management processes.
- **India's Role:** India is the largest contributor to plastic pollution, releasing 9.3 million tonnes annually, far exceeding Nigeria (3.5 mt), Indonesia (3.4 mt), and China (2.8 mt).

### Key Issues on the Negotiating Table

#### 1. Global Rules for Plastic Life Cycle:

- Focus on controlling plastic pollution from production to disposal.
- Potential bans on specific types of plastics, products, and harmful chemical additives.
- Legally binding recycling targets and mandates for using recycled content in goods.

#### 2. Just Transition:

- Discussions on safeguarding the livelihoods of workers and communities affected by reduced plastic production.

### 3. Points of Disagreement:

- Some countries, including Saudi Arabia, Iran, Russia, and India, oppose stricter production mandates, favoring innovative waste management and sustainable plastic use instead.
- Divergence over financial mechanisms to support treaty implementation.

#### India's Position

- **Opposition to Polymer Restrictions:** India opposes restrictions on polymer production, stating such measures exceed the UNEA's original mandate.
- **Focus on Financial Assistance:** India advocates for including financial aid, technical assistance, and technology transfer in the treaty's provisions.
- **Chemical Regulation:** India insists decisions on harmful chemicals in plastics should rely on scientific evidence and remain under domestic regulation.
- **Single-Use Plastic Ban:** India banned 19 categories of single-use plastics in 2022 but maintains that decisions to phase out plastic items should consider national circumstances and be nationally driven.

This treaty represents a critical opportunity for global collaboration in tackling the escalating crisis of plastic pollution while balancing environmental, social, and economic considerations.



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