

Plastic Pollution INC-5.2 Highlights: Saturday, 9 August 2025

Delegates convened for the resumed fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-5.2) to develop an international legally binding instrument (ILBI) on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. They met in a stocktaking plenary late in the morning to consider an “[Assembled Text](#)” of the ILBI representing their efforts in the first four days of negotiations at INC-5.2. They returned to contact group and informal discussions in the afternoon and into the night.

Stocktaking Plenary

INC Chair Luis Vayas noted that the Committee would take stock of progress made, consider the outcomes of the contact groups, and decide on the way forward. He explained that the Assembled Text is for informational purposes only and represents a snapshot of discussions in the contact groups as of Friday afternoon, 8 August.

Contact Group 1 Co-Chairs Maria Angélica Ikeda (Brazil) and Axel Borchmann (Germany) presented the status of their work, noting that no text had been agreed for any of the items under their mandate. They noted that: a placeholder for a potential provision on scope has been included in the Assembled Text, although divergence remained; and that the contact group had not yet proceeded to line-by-line textual negotiations on definitions (Article 2), exemptions (Article 4), and [supply][sustainable production] (Article 6). The Co-Chairs reported that informals were ongoing for provisions on [sustainable consumption and production of] [product design] [problematic] plastic products (Article 3) and on plastic product design (Article 5).

Contact Group 2 Co-Chairs Peter Justice Dery (Ghana) and Tuulia Toikka (Finland) reported that they had completed a first round of textual negotiations on all articles under their mandate: releases and leakages (Article 7); plastic waste management (Article 8); [[existing][and][legacy] plastic [waste] pollution] [remediation of plastic pollution] (Article 9); and [just] transition[s] [for workers] (Article 10). They noted that while the text had expanded, it provided a strong basis to continue negotiations. They reported that work is ongoing in informal settings.

Contact Group 3 Co-Chairs Kate Lynch (Australia) and Gwen Sisor (Palau) reported progress on provisions on financial [resources and] mechanism (Article 11) and [international cooperation] [cooperation in] capacity building, technical assistance and technology transfer [, including international cooperation] (Article 12). On Article 11, they noted that the Assembled Text reflects a revised iteration of the article that the Co-Chairs were mandated to prepare, on the basis of a non-negotiated summary table drawing on the Chair’s Text and proposals and views heard at INC 5.1 and 5.2. This new iteration had been accepted as a constructive basis for further negotiations. The Co-Chairs also noted that work will continue in informals and that line-by-line negotiations had commenced on Article 12.

Contact Group 4 Co-Chairs Go Kobayashi (Japan) and Linroy Christian (Antigua and Barbuda) reported, among other things, that: all articles in their mandate had been opened; the preamble

and Articles 14-18 had not yet been fully considered; members had forwarded articles on depositary (Article 31) and authentic text (Article 32) to the Open-ended Legal Drafting Group; three informal groups had convened to discuss principles [and approaches] (Article 2), conference of the parties (Article 20) and subsidiary bodies (Article 20bis), and health (Article 19); new articles had been proposed with concepts not encompassed in the Chair’s Text; and cross-cutting elements, such as the nature of decision-making and the number and character of subsidiary bodies, would warrant further consideration.

Lamenting that, after two and a half years of negotiations, insufficient progress has been made, INC Chair Vayas drew attention to the plethora of unresolved issues in the Assembled Text. He proposed reconvening the contact groups to review articles with an aim to forward text to the Open-ended Legal Drafting Group, calling on delegates to work with and support the Co-Chairs to facilitate the finalization of the text. INC Chair Vayas noted that he would continue to work with the Co-Chairs to identify issues where divergence persists. He noted that at any point where broad alignment is reached on articles, plenary would be convened to transmit text to the Open-ended Legal Drafting Group. The US, CHINA, and others supported the Chair’s approach.

On the **Assembled Text**, many delegations expressed concern about the lack of progress in the negotiations. Kuwait, for the LIKE-MINDED GROUP, supported by the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, MALAYSIA, IRAN, MOROCCO, INDIA, CUBA, and KAZAKHSTAN, among many others, lamented that an article on scope had not been given a fair chance to be considered during discussions.

Tuvalu, for PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES, called for a workable agreement that covers the full plastic(s) lifecycle and is not primarily based on national measures. COOK ISLANDS requested clarity on Article 6 and argued that a robust financial mechanism must be central, not peripheral, to the treaty. They also stressed that “this process cannot result in a narrow waste management treaty.”

PERU underlined that “this weekend will be decisive” for streamlining the text, highlighting, with URUGUAY, the need to focus on articles that are essential for a balanced agreement, including Articles 3, 5, 6, 11, and 20. Palau, for the ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES, prioritized addressing existing plastic pollution in the marine environment, with obligations within and beyond national jurisdiction; finance and capacity building; and attention to the special circumstances of small island developing states (SIDS) and least developed countries (LDCs). Stressing “we are here to get a deal,” PANAMA reiterated their position that the ILBI must address the entire plastics lifecycle, including production and microplastics.

IRAN clarified that there should be no text related to Article 3 and, with INDIA, Article 6, and stressed that all health-related issues are under the mandate of the World Health Organization.

AZERBAIJAN lamented that certain chemicals are being targeted in the text, noting the economic impacts for some states.

TAJKISTAN called for the future ILBI to reference countries with economies in transition to ensure they can benefit from the financial mechanism.

KENYA requested the inclusion of their inputs under Article 19 and reiterated their proposal that the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, serve as the seat of the secretariat. SWITZERLAND emphasized the need to resolve cross-cutting issues and highlighted their interest in hosting the treaty secretariat while noting that this decision should be made at the first conference of the parties (COP 1).

On the process, Kuwait, for the LIKE-MINDED GROUP, supported by the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, INDONESIA, MOROCCO, and INDIA, called for consensus to be reflected in all decisions.

ETHIOPIA, supported by others, lamented that consensus had been used to “hold the entire process hostage” and called for informal discussions to address challenging articles.

Saudi Arabia, for the ARAB GROUP, supported by MOROCCO, called for all textual proposals to be discussed, and requested delegates to begin to consider what could be excluded from the final outcome due to irreconcilable differences.

URUGUAY underlined the need to identify the essential articles for the future treaty. NORWAY called for attention to the interplay between key articles, and stressed that “we cannot avoid discussions on issues with strong support in the INC.”

COLOMBIA suggested that delegates work informally before reconvening in a stocktaking plenary on Tuesday. The EU, with CHILE, requested that the INC consider meeting in informal settings, with the EU suggesting that more than two meetings could be convened at the same time. PERU called for another stocktaking plenary on Monday evening. GRENADA emphasized the need for transparency and representation, especially for small delegations overstretched due to the diversity of modalities for negotiations, and requested detailed reports from informals.

CHINA suggested that Heads of Delegation could address articles with high divergence and encouraged INC Chair Vayas to carry out extensive consultations.

Noting that the text had ballooned from 22 to 34 pages, FIJI proposed, among others, a time-bound process to streamline the text, and immediate transmission of updates from informals to plenary.

INC Chair Vayas proposed, and delegates agreed, that the INC transmit Articles 31 and 32 to the Open-ended Legal Drafting Group. He urged the Committee to continue informal discussions also on Sunday, 10 August, when no formal meetings are scheduled. He noted that informal meetings are needed to provide alternative ways to seek common ground and reminded delegates to speed up the pace of work for a concrete and clean text.

Contact Group 1

The group met in the afternoon to receive updates from two informal groups. On **plastic products** (Article 3), Saudi Arabia reported that the informal group had completed a first reading of the article, with the text now reflecting members’ views. They noted, among others, a little convergence on national measures, although views still diverged on the details. As the text had ballooned, they proposed providing a text that delegates can voluntarily use to facilitate informal informals.

On **plastic product design** (Article 5), the Netherlands noted that the informal group had resumed consideration of paragraph 1 on national measures in the afternoon but that discussions were stuck on procedural questions, and there had been no time to consider bridging proposals. One delegate, supported by others, raised concern about the addition of new concepts, urging others to focus on bridging proposals. Another delegation stressed that inserting new language should not be limited as this constrains negotiations. Co-Chair Borchmann clarified that there is no limitation on new text. Some delegates urged that further informal discussions should focus on identifying the structure and basic elements of the article. Co-Chairs then proposed that informals continue on Article 5 in the evening and urged members to meet and further discuss conceptual and fundamental issues relating to Articles 3 and 5 on Sunday, 10 August.

Contact Group 3

This group resumed discussions on **financial [resources and] mechanism** (Article 11), based on the Co-Chairs’ text.

Co-Chair Lynch invited delegates to highlight missing elements for inclusion in the text. She noted that once interventions on key concepts are received, line-by-line textual negotiations may proceed either in a contact or informal group setting. Delegates introduced concepts such as: a compensation fund; burden-sharing agreement; remediation funds, including for waste management and circular economy initiatives; and the COP’s residual authority over the entities under the financial mechanism. Some delegations also called to include references to “countries with economies in transition” and “countries experiencing ecological and geographical challenges which pose disproportionate impacts” as part of the list of recipient countries. Discussions continued into the night.

Contact Group 4

The group met in the afternoon to continue the first read-through of the **preamble**, contained in the Assembled Text. Proposals included, among others, deleting references to: the principle of common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities; the full lifecycle of plastic; and plastic pollution being a serious human health problem. Delegates also called for: focusing the preamble on plastic waste management; affirming that plastics per se are not pollutants; and noting the global challenge of accumulated legacy plastic waste in developing countries due to illegal transboundary movement. Others proposed referencing: the mutual supportiveness of trade and environmental agreements; the right to a safe and clean environment, of rights of Indigenous Peoples, and of future and present generations; and zero-waste initiatives. Several delegates supported reviewing the preamble once the substantive elements of the treaty are agreed upon, rather than in isolation.

Co-Chair Linroy then urged delegates to submit their inputs on Articles 14-18 to the portal and proposed that the Co-Chairs prepare new text for consideration during the next contact group session. Some delegations requested the establishment of an informal on **relationship with other agreements** (Article 23bis) and another on Articles 14-16. An informal on **health** (Article 19), co-facilitated by Brazil and Uganda, met in the evening.

In the Corridors

After a late start, which allowed delegations to consider the Assembled Text, the disappointment on the slow progress made since the beginning of the meeting was clear. “We are running out of time, and the text is a mess!” exclaimed one delegate. To address this, delegates expressed their willingness to work in different formats to engage in the most candid discussions on the draft treaty text. On Saturday, delegates resumed both contact and informal group meetings, leaving some wondering whether the proposals heard in plenary would be taken on board, or whether the work process would remain unchanged. On Sunday, they are expected to meet in informal informals and bilaterals, but the working modality on Monday “is still an open question.”

Reflecting on the process, delegates shared different views. “If we don’t agree on the nitty-gritty here, it will be lost for good,” confided one delegate, who also expressed frustration at “all the brackets” in the text. “At this stage, we cannot allow ourselves to drown in the details,” shared one seasoned observer of the opinion that a lot can be left to the COP. “We need to make sure that the processes and procedures to implement the treaty are solid.” “Let’s not make the perfect the enemy of the good,” voiced another delegate, sagely. “But we are nowhere near either good or perfect,” retorted another, pointing to the 1488 square brackets in the Assembled Text. With four formal negotiating days left, only time will tell if “we’ll have something to celebrate on 14 August.”

While delegates hurried on with their work, Indigenous representatives commemorated the International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples, lamenting the bracketed references to Indigenous Peoples throughout the Assembled Text and urging delegates to ensure that the treaty proceeds, “with us, not without us,” guaranteeing their full and effective participation and addressing, rather than reinforcing, historical inequities.