

Plastic Pollution INC-5.2 Highlights: Tuesday, 12 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 contact and informal groups throughout the day and late into the night, basing their discussions on the “[Assembled Text](#)” of the ILBI, or using the status of work documents prepared by the Contact Groups’ Co-Chairs.

Contact Group 2 delegates met in informals on **[releases and leakages]** (Article 7), **[existing][and][legacy] plastic [waste] pollution [remediation of plastic pollution]** (Article 9), and on **[just] transition[s] [for workers]** (Article 10).

In parallel, ministers convened in an informal dialogue on investment opportunities for a circular economy in the context of the global plastics treaty, organized by the Government of Switzerland.

Contact Group 1

Co-chaired by Maria Angélica Ikeda (Brazil) and Axel Borchmann (Germany), the group met briefly in the afternoon to receive updates from informal discussions.

On **[sustainable consumption and production of] [product design] [problematic] plastic products** (Article 3), the Co-Facilitator from New Zealand reported that delegates continued to engage in conceptual discussions, such as on how to ensure global coordination of measures; and the role of a subsidiary body or any other body, expert group, or platform. They noted that delegations could still find common ground and encouraged them to continue informal informals in the evening, and to report back to the informal group tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, 13 August.

On **plastic product design** (Article 5), the Co-Facilitator from the Netherlands reported that they had provided some guiding questions to help delegates identify areas that may merit a further exchange of views and identify possible landing zones. They noted that time would be better spent if delegates could meet in informal informals, with the opportunity to introduce any text that emerged to the informal group. Co-Chair Borchmann shared that an informal on Article 5 was tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, 13 August.

Regarding the informal informal on **scope**, Saudi Arabia reported that discussions had enabled delegates to better understand the divergent perspectives on this issue. They noted

that efforts are underway to schedule another informal informal on Wednesday, 13 August, to further discussions, including by considering options to reflect references to UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) resolution 5/14 and members’ concerns regarding “protections of specific areas.”

Concerning an informal informal on **[supply][sustainable production]** (Article 6), Japan reported that discussions had been of a conceptual nature and that countries’ positions “are still at a distance,” and expressed reservations about the usefulness of holding another informal informal. A number of delegations opined otherwise, urging for a further informal informal on Article 6, with one delegation highlighting its link with scope. Others questioned the insistence of further discussing Article 6 and treating it “as a package” with scope, arguing that unlike Article 6, which remains very divergent, discussions on scope have been “fruitful” and can thus proceed separately. One delegation highlighted their position that Article 6 should not be included in the future ILBI. Another delegation noted that discussions on scope and Article 6 could proceed based on a concrete bridging text that had already been proposed during the informal informals. Co-Chair Borchmann noted that the requests for another informal informal would be brought to the Bureau, and Japan indicated a willingness to continue facilitating discussions, also in a smaller group setting. Delegations also highlighted ongoing work on Article 6 in various small group and bilateral settings.

Contact Group 3

Co-chaired by Kate Lynch (Australia) and Gwen Sisior (Palau), this group met in the afternoon and resumed consideration of **[international cooperation] [cooperation in] capacity building, technical assistance and technology transfer [, including international cooperation]** (Article 12).

Delegates discussed a provision (paragraph 6) mandating the first session of the conference of the parties (COP 1) to make recommendations on how capacity building, technical assistance, and technology transfer could be enhanced under the Article, with some calling to replace “enhanced” with “provided.” One delegate opposed using “provided,” highlighting that this Article was to encourage cooperation, not to deliver a service.

Divergence ensued on whether the provision should refer to “safe,” “environmentally friendly and affordable,” or “environmentally sound” technology transfer, with some calling to delete or defer consideration of these qualifiers to ensure consistency across the Article. Views also diverged on whether

to add text specifying that technology transfer be on “voluntary and mutually agreed terms,” with some delegations opposing this language, and a few calling to defer the matter as it is a cross-cutting issue across the Article. One delegation requested the Co-Chairs to reflect that the modality of treating terms or issues as cross cutting was not agreed to by all countries.

Delegates also diverged on whether to mandate COP 1 to develop the terms of reference and modalities for the mechanism for international cooperation, with some delegates noting that discussions are ongoing on whether to establish the mechanism, and that proposals directed to COP 1 are contained in other paragraphs. Co-Chair Sisor proposed that the contact group reconvene on Wednesday, 13 August, to complete their first reading of the article, to ensure all regional groups had provided their comments and proposals.

Contact Group 4

Co-chaired by Go Kobayashi (Japan) and Linroy Christian (Antigua and Barbuda), the group met in the morning and evening, with Co-Chair Christian pointing to the status of work document as of 11:00 pm on Monday, 11 August.

On articles related to **national [action] plans, reporting, and [effectiveness evaluation] [review]** (Articles 14-16), the Co-Facilitator from Palau reported that the informal group had considered a streamlined text and opened discussions on national [action] plans. They reported that divergence remained on, *inter alia*, the description of the plans, their starting date, and their legal status. They highlighted that the informal group had agreed to use the Co-Facilitators’ proposal for future discussions.

On **relationship with other agreements** (Article 23bis), Colombia, as Co-Facilitator, reported that delegates had discussed whether this article would be a standalone article, or be incorporated into other articles or the preamble. They requested more time for discussions.

On the **preamble and principles [and approaches]** (Article 1bis), Saudi Arabia, as Co-Facilitator, noted limited progress in the discussion on the chapeau of Article 1bis, but highlighted that a zero option (no text) was still on the table. In the ensuing discussion, two delegations noted their reservations on the presentation of the chapeau, with one also noting that the title remains partly bracketed. Co-Chair Christian requested the group to consider a new working modality in order to make progress. The informal met again in the afternoon.

Co-Chair Christian also pointed to an article-by-article mapping chart to help delegates understand the work remaining under the group’s mandate, noting that there may be other ways to resolve impasses on: objective (Article 1); the decision-making part of the COP (Article 20); amendments to the convention (Article 23); reservations (Article 29); and general exclusion (Article 29bis). He also highlighted the need for other means to resolve articles referencing regional economic integration organizations.

Some delegations stressed the need to allocate equal time for discussions on Articles 14-16, with one noting that too much time had been spent discussing health (Article 19), which they preferred to delete. Others supported further discussions on Article 19. Yet others urged separate discussions for public information, awareness, education and research (Article 18) and Article 19.

A few delegations called to hold joint discussions on subsidiary bodies (Article 20bis) and on implementation and compliance (Article 13), which was opposed by others.

Throughout the day, the group engaged in informals on: the preamble; principles [and approaches]; COP; and subsidiary bodies. In the evening, delegates agreed to forward Article 30 (**withdrawal**) to the plenary.

In the Corridors

With the “bulk of the work supposed to be completed” by Wednesday, 13 August, a “sense of panic” pervaded the negotiating rooms at the Palais des Nations. “We have a mountain of work left, and very little time to get through it,” said one exasperated delegate, “We need to start making these compromises.” So far, “we have tripled the text, and there is no consensus on the core elements that the treaty should contain. We are just walking in circles, with no end in sight,” chuckled another delegate.

Around the venue, some delegations were perplexed by what they called “mixed messages” touching on these “core elements.” “If you love plastic, then we shouldn’t even bother negotiating a scope that includes production caps!” With discussions on scope and Article 6 still at the “conceptual stage” at this phase of negotiations, some wondered how the impasse on these core, divergent issues would be resolved. One delegate suggested that now might be the time to “manage our expectations,” sharing that “we will all be equally unhappy with the outcome,” and adding “let’s please stop negotiating based on wishful thinking.”

In some rooms, the outcome itself came into question, with a delegate sharing that “without some good faith compromises, we may walk away empty-handed.” Meanwhile, in a briefing with observers, both INC Chair Luis Vayas and INC Executive Secretary Jyoti Mathur-Filipp expressed confidence that it will be “possible to deliver an effective text on Thursday.” This led one observer to comment that he “hoped there was a magic rabbit that will pop out of a hat at the last minute,” stating that “there are many bridges to build before we get to the end.”

At this point, the “only way out is through a package deal addressing the most fundamental parts of the text,” opined one delegate, sharing that “if such a text exists, we have not seen it.” On this concept of a “package deal,” another shared that “unless we get serious on finance, we’ll remain stuck,” noting that the “world has changed and help may not arrive in the ways we are used to,” pointing to deep cuts in development assistance. Others were hesitant to talk about a package at all: “there are so many balls still in the air.”

We need to stick to the message that “there is still hope,” shared one delegate, who also sketched a scenario where the INC could go back to UNEA to seek an extended mandate. “But we can’t risk reopening the sticky discussions on scope, so we prefer to live in hope that we somehow finish here in Geneva.”

As delegations prepared to leave the venue for the night, they were alerted that a compromise text, prepared by INC Chair Vayas, based on the current state of negotiations, could very well be available for consideration on Wednesday. Only time will tell if it proves to be the winning ticket.