



Open letter to the EU Delegation to the INC-1 in Uruguay

Brussels, 24th of November 2022

Subject: EU leadership to end plastic pollution requires putting plastic production from fossil fuels on the agenda of the INC-1

On Monday, delegations from across the world are convening at the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) in Uruguay to start developing an international legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution. Policymakers from the European Commission and Member States will be on site to represent the European Union (EU) and we welcome the news that the EU has officially joined the High Ambition Coalition to End Plastic Pollution (HAC). In this regard, we call on the EU to be a voice for ambition within the coalition and beyond, staunchly advocating for control measures that eliminate problematic polymers and phase down overall production of virgin plastic as part of the package of policies in the new instrument.

Whilst these negotiations kick off, Europe enters its coldest months. Threats of an energy crisis loom and individuals and businesses face spiraling energy prices and the prospect of supply cuts. It may not be clear from the face of it, but the global energy crisis and plastic pollution crisis are closely intertwined. 99% of plastics are made from fossil fuels, through an industrial process powered by fossil fuels. Because of this relationship, we believe that the EU delegation must strive to put the energy and fossil-fuel consumption related to plastic production on the INC agenda. We will not end plastic pollution without restricting and controlling plastic production, and doing so will go a long way towards addressing both the energy and the climate crises. Yet the Council's decision that lays out the bloc's priorities for INC negotiations contains no mention of the fossil fuels nor the energy consumption of the petrochemical sector. [Research from Break Free From Plastic Europe and the Center for International Environmental Law](#) revealed that 15% of the EU final gas consumption and 14% of its final oil consumption goes to the petrochemical sector. This is far too high for it to not be on the agenda of INC negotiations.

The petrochemical industry is the largest driver of the growth for oil and gas consumption globally, contributing to the climate crisis and its disastrous impacts on vulnerable populations and ecosystems. The EU's Green Deal targets and its international climate pledges are incompatible with a business-as-usual scenario in which the petrochemical sector aims to triple plastic production [by 2060](#).

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL THURSDAY 24TH at 12:00 CET

We need a managed phase-down and just transition of the petrochemical sector globally in line with the vital targets of staying under 1.5 degree of global warming and ending plastic pollution. But as Europe faces a fossil-fuel crisis and the European petrochemical sectors's energy demands fail to decrease, governments are making a dash for gas in countries across Africa, fuelling further resource colonialism. The EU cannot step into INC negotiations as a 'climate leader' without assessing the climate damage of fossil fuels and the toxic impact that goes along with it on the Global South. European Commission Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans [said earlier this year](#) that *"The European Union has been a driving force to tackle plastic pollution. We are determined to keep pushing for ambitious global action, as the fight against the climate and biodiversity crises must involve all of us."* The EU has also voiced support for the phase-down of all fossil fuels at the recent COP 27 in Egypt. We hope the EU will bring this same ambition to the INC table. Every barrel of oil or cubic meter of fossil gas used to make plastics is contributing to more plastic pollution and more climate damage.

For these reasons, we call on all EU delegates attending this first INC meeting to not let the petrochemical sector off the hook. An EU industry reliant on massive amounts of fossil fuels and unsustainable production and consumption of plastic is an EU industry not fit for the future. In the short term, the EU cannot allow current levels of gas consumption to go to the production of unnecessary and single use plastics in times of a war and energy crisis and, in the long term, the EU must not allow its industry to be built on a fossil-fuel foundation.

Without setting mandatory restrictions and controls to eliminate problematic polymers and phase down overall production of virgin plastics, the parties to this new instrument stand to lose a significant opportunity to guarantee a future free of pollution from plastics. To this end, we call on the EU delegation to advocate for meaningful ambition at INC negotiations to end plastic pollution at source and ensure that the primary causes of plastic pollution are addressed: unsustainable production of plastic.

Yours sincerely,

Lili Fuhr
*Deputy Director
Climate & Energy Program*

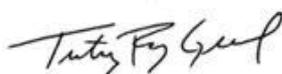
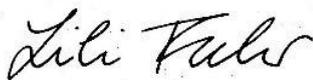
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Rethink Plastic alliance
Break Free From Plastic Europe





Break Free From Plastic is a global movement envisioning a future free from plastic pollution made up of more than 2,000 organisations from across the world demanding massive reductions in single-use plastic and pushing for lasting solutions to the plastic pollution crisis. The Rethink Plastic alliance is the EU policy arm of this movement.

For more information, visit www.breakfreefromplastic.org



The Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) is a not-for-profit legal organisation that uses the power of law to protect the environment, promote human rights, and ensure a just and sustainable society. CIEL pursues its mission through legal research and advocacy, education and training, with a focus on connecting global challenges to the experiences of communities on the ground. In the process, we build and maintain lasting partnerships with communities and non-profit organisations around the world.

For more information, visit www.ciel.org



The Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) is a not-for-profit based in London, UK. EIA investigates and campaigns against environmental crime and abuse, focussing on transnational wildlife crime, plastics pollution, commercial exploitation of cetaceans, illegal logging, climate crime and eliminating short lived climate pollutants.

For more information, visit www.eia-international.org