

STATEMENT

OPENING PLENARY OF THE 5TH SESSION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE TO DEVELOP AN INTERNATIONAL LEGALLY BINDING INSTRUMENT ON PLASTIC POLLUTION, INCLUDING IN THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT 25 NOVEMBER 2024

Esteemed delegates, distinguished representatives, and fellow advocates,

We stand before you today representing Consumers International, an organisation dedicated to championing the rights and interests of consumers worldwide, with 200 consumer groups across 100 countries. Our key concern is the urgent need for a binding and ambitious treaty to address the escalating crisis of plastic pollution.

The shocking impact of plastic production

The weight of plastic production—from extraction to end-of-use—places an alarming burden on our society. This impact is not merely environmental; it extends to our health and climate, as plastic is a byproduct of fossil fuels. The repercussions are profound, affecting ecosystems, marine life, and human health throughout the lifecycle of plastics.

Consumer demand for change

Our research indicates that a significant percentage of consumers—94%—support the shift to a green and inclusive economy, and over 80% hold governments, businesses, and international institutions responsible for implementing the necessary changes. This data underscores the collective will of consumers to push for sustainable products and systems that are affordable, accessible.

Challenges faced by consumers

As you are all consumers yourselves, you understand the shocking difficulty of avoiding plastics in our daily lives. This reality illustrates the urgent need for systemic change. Consumers are calling for a treaty that is not only binding but also ambitious, paving the way for a sustainable future. We need:

- **Strong binding product redesign provisions:** These should prioritise sustainable materials and designs that minimise plastic usage and allow for the longer safe life of products, ensuring consumer protection and the right to a safe environment.
- **Protection from harmful chemicals:** Consumers deserve assurance that products are safe and free from hazardous substances, thereby guaranteeing consumer protection and safety.

- **Clear and transparent communication:** We urge the implementation of warning labels regarding health risks associated with products and packaging, similar to the front-of-pack labels for added sugar, fat, and additives seen in multiple Latin American countries.
- **Instructions on use and disposal:** Consumers require clear guidance on how to responsibly and safely use and dispose of plastic products when there are no substitutes available.
- **Commitments to phase out plastic production:** We need investment commitments that support the development of safe substitutes for plastics.
- **Extended Producer Responsibility:** We call for a binding and ambitious Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) provision within this treaty. EPR is a crucial strategy that holds producers accountable for the entire lifecycle of their products, allowing our systems to be redesigned to prioritise sustainability. This approach not only encourages responsible manufacturing but also fosters innovation in sustainable product design, making sustainability the norm rather than the exception.

Furthermore, many of Consumers International's Members in high-income economies recognise that their production and consumption patterns disproportionately burden consumers and societies at the other end of the world.

Therefore, we call for transparency in export and transboundary movements of plastic waste. Such practices must be disclosed, controlled, and waste transference should be strictly prohibited.

Lastly, consumer awareness is crucial for adapting to the necessary changes in our systems, and it is essential to involve consumers in any policy making process as key stakeholders.

In conclusion, we urge member states to unite in creating a transformative treaty that enhances consumer protection, promotes sustainability, and addresses the plastic pollution crisis head-on. Together, we can forge a path toward a healthier planet for current and future generations.

Thank you.