

Press Release

For Immediate Release

Questioning Asia's Position on INC-5: Lack of Ambition to Tackle Plastic Pollution Crisis

Busan, December 1, 2024 – On the final day of the fifth negotiation session in Busan to develop an International Legally Binding Instrument (ILBI) to end plastic pollution (INC-5), the position of Asian nations is questioned. The Alliance for Zero Waste Indonesia (AZWI) expressed disappointment at the lack of ambition from Asian countries, except Bangladesh and the Philippines, regarding the draft text. This includes commitments to reducing plastic production and addressing harmful chemicals in plastics. Considering Asian nations are seen as major contributors to marine plastic pollution, their silence reveals a troubling lack of commitment to tackling this crisis.

“This is not a drill, this is a fight for survival,” said Juan Carlos Monterrey, Special Representative for Climate Change & National Climate Change Director of the Ministry of Environment of Panama this morning. *“Plastic for us is a weapon of mass destruction... it is time [for countries] to step up or get out!”*. Over 100 countries have voiced support for establishing a global target to reduce plastic production, while others opposed the production cap.



Press briefing on Member State Representatives Address Ambition in the Final Hours of Plastics Treaty Negotiations 1 December 2024 at 10 am local time at BEXCO Exhibition Hall 1 (Source: GAIA)

In 2024, plastic production in Southeast Asia is projected to reach 30.48 million tons, with a compound annual growth rate exceeding 4% from 2024 to 2029. This figure is expected to rise to 38.36 million tons by 2029¹. However, there is mounting scientific evidence that plastics pose harmful effects to human health. More than 200 microplastic investigations have been conducted in the ASEAN region since 2020². The findings reveal high levels of microplastic exposure in the human body, ranging from 80 to 490 mg per capita per day³.

"As part of the Asian community often blamed as contributors to plastic pollution, we are disappointed by the stance of Asian countries in these negotiations. They tend to support the expansion of plastic production without considering the realities in their own countries. Yet, Asian countries have a significant opportunity to lead by offering solutions rooted in local wisdom," stated Nindhita Proboretno, National Co-Coordinator of AZWI.

Restrictions on Civil Society Participation

The INC-5 negotiations have faced criticism for limiting civil society participation, raising concerns over a lack of transparency and inclusivity. Observers, particularly from Asian countries, have reported restricted access to important meetings such as the Regional Meeting and Contact Groups. Logistical challenges such as insufficient seating and fewer speaking opportunities during plenary sessions. These challenges, initially raised at INC-4 and further discussed during the Intersessional Work in Bangkok, emphasize a lack of genuine commitment to including all stakeholders in this critical treaty process.

"The process at INC-5 has been disappointing, especially compared to other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), which have historically been more inclusive and transparent. Indonesian civil society has traveled far, bringing expertise and firsthand experience, yet our voices are sidelined. The limited access and opportunities for us in these negotiations are hindering our participation. We cannot give up. We must continue to fight for our health, environment, and future. Time is running out, and today is the only chance we have to push for a meaningful and ambitious treaty," stated Yuyun Ismawati, Senior Advisor at Nexus3 Foundation.

Critics of Indonesia's Position

The Chair's Non-Paper issued on December 29⁴ raised concerns as many environmental, health, and financial aspects fail to address plastics across their entire lifecycle. Indonesia's proposal to change the title of Article 7 from "Emissions and Releases" to "Releases and Leakages" in the Conference Room Paper (CRP) complicates the understanding of plastic

¹ <https://www.mordorintelligence.com/industry-reports/south-east-asia-sea-plastics-market>

² <https://ikhapp.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/giz2024-en-baseline-study-on-microplastics.pdf>

³ <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.est.4c00010>

⁴Non-Paper containing the draft text of the Chair of the Committee (29 November 2024)
https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/46705/Chair_Proposal.pdf

pollution pathways from upstream to downstream. By shifting focus to “leakages,” the intervention prioritizes waste management rather than pollution control from plastic production upstream to end-of-life waste. There are indications of plastic industry influence on the delegation, seeking to obscure their responsibility and shift the burden onto the public.

“Once again, we fail to see Indonesia taking a stance for its people. This treaty is not just about industrial interests or waste management; it’s about the survival of communities. Many vulnerable groups and communities in Indonesia are already directly impacted by plastic pollution,” said Abdul Ghofar, Urban and Pollution Campaigner for WALHI.



AZWI alongside more than 150 organizations held a Press Conference in front of BEXCO Exhibition Hall 1 29 December 2024 at 10 am local time. (Source: AZWI)

Reuse as a Priority Solution

A recent report by the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA), titled "Unpacking Reuse in Asia,"⁵ highlights innovative reuse and refill systems in Asia as effective alternatives to single-use plastics. These systems reduce plastic waste, support local economies, and promote sustainable consumption patterns.

⁵ Unpacking Reuse In Asia <https://www.no-burn.org/reuse-in-asia/>

“Asia has a long history of reuse economies that are evolving to tackle single-use plastics,” said Rahyang Nusantara, Deputy Director of Dietplastik Indonesia. “This report demonstrates how reuse and refill systems can transform consumption patterns while supporting livelihoods.”



*Launching of Unpacking Reuse in Asia Report 27 November 2024 at BEXCO Exhibition Hall 2
(Source: Dietplastik Indonesia)*

Global Leadership Starts at Home

Strong leadership, especially from Southeast Asian leaders and Indonesia⁶, is pivotal to pushing their position on the INC5 draft text and supporting ambitious measures.

AZWI urges the Indonesian Government to:

- Prioritize human health and the environment in these negotiations by considering the entire lifecycle of plastics and basing decisions on scientific evidence for the sustainability of all living beings.
- Take bold action to limit primary plastic production and enhance transparency and traceability of chemicals in plastics. This includes regulating Chemicals of Concern (CoC) based on chemical groupings.
- Actively promote and support reuse solutions as a more efficient resource management practice by investing in innovative solutions and encouraging stakeholder engagement,

⁶ Joint Statement: Asean Leadership Key To The Success Of Global Plastic Treaty To End Plastic Pollution
https://resolutions.unep.org/incres/uploads/final_csos_joint_statement_asean_leadership_key_to_the_success_of_global_plastic_treaty_to_end_plastic_pollution_compressed.pdf



especially from producers, to help reduce waste and contribute to a more sustainable environment.

- Commit to a just transition by protecting workers and marginalized communities disproportionately affected by plastic policies and ensuring their participation in designing these policies.

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About the Alliance for Zero Waste Indonesia (AZWI)

The alliance of 10 leading environmental organisations: YPBB, Dietplastik Indonesia, Nexus3 Foundation, PPLH Bali, ECOTON, ICEL, Zero Waste Surabaya, Greenpeace Indonesia, Gita Pertiwi and WALHI. AZWI campaigns for the genuine Zero Waste concept in the context of mainstreaming through various existing Zero Waste activities, programs, and initiatives to be implemented in cities and districts in Indonesia by considering the hierarchy of waste management and the life cycle of materials.