

Our response to the Revised Zero Draft

The Scientists' Coalition for an Effective Plastic Treaty expresses gratitude to the Chair and Secretariat for preparing the revised Zero Draft (rZD), to which we present our commentary. We strongly urge member states to prioritise independent scientific evidence in decision-making while drawing from the precedents of other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).

Our commentary emphasises the imperative of addressing plastic pollution within the broader context of interconnected human and planetary threats. This is best achieved by prioritising mandatory measures that simplify and reduce global quantities of plastics produced. Summaries of our key points are below, and more details on each are available in our full published response.

We focus on the following key points:

Integrated assessments of sustainability, safety, essentiality, and transparency

We strongly recommend evidence-based refinement of the proposed assessment criteria in annexes A-D and F into an integrated framework of distinct safety (hazard-based), sustainability, essentiality, and transparency criteria shaped by independent expert input through a subsidiary scientific body.

Sustainability criteria

We endorse the adoption of distinct sustainability criteria to evaluate plastic chemicals, polymers, materials, products, alternatives, substitutes, technologies, systems and services in a balanced manner across environmental, societal, economic, and environmental dimensions according to resource consumption (including energy and water), land use, as well as carbon and other hazardous emissions.

Essentiality criteria

We strongly suggest the application of the essential-use concept to facilitate PPP reduction targets and to eliminate non-essential, hazardous and unsustainable uses, and/or their substitution for safer, more sustainable alternatives where their use is assessed as currently 'essential'.

Science policy interface and conflict of interest

The forthcoming treaty necessitates a robust interface between science and policy to facilitate a two-way dialogue and ensure delivery of policy-relevant information, knowledge and guidance. It is imperative that the interface body is constituted of balanced, representative, and independent experts and that adopted policies are free from conflicts of interest. Guidelines should limit participation by those with past or present ties to the chemical or plastics industries or other parties with clear vested interests.

Primary plastic polymer reduction baselines and targets

We stress the importance of globally defined targets and avoiding nationally determined approaches as in the Paris Agreement, with demonstrated limited effectiveness. To this end, we support a time-bound international legally-binding primary plastic polymer reduction target and supportive national reduction targets.

Safety (hazard-based) criteria

A hazard-based approach is vital, because: (i) the alternative, a risk-based approach, incorrectly assumes it is possible to derive safe levels of hazardous chemicals throughout the full life cycle of plastics, (ii) it aligns with precautionary and prevention principles, ensuring human, ecological and environmental safety, and (iii) precedents exist for a hazard-based approach in several MEAs.

Transparency criteria

We support standardised and harmonised information disclosure, labelling, tracking, and monitoring specific to the full life cycle of plastics for the future instrument, and caution against dependency on other multilateral trade regulations while ensuring complementarity and knowledge sharing and avoiding duplication with other MEAs.



Read the full response with all the details.



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