



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

檳城消費人協會 பிளாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

10 Jalan Masjid Negeri, 11600 Pulau Pinang, Malaysia
Tel: 604-8299511 Fax: 604-8298109
email: consumerofpenang@gmail.com

Websites:
(in English, BM, Chinese,
& Tamil)
www.consumer.org.my

Media Statement

19 November 2024

CAP urges the Malaysian government to be more ambitious at plastic treaty negotiations

The last scheduled round of negotiations for the Global Plastics Treaty will be held in Busan, South Korea from 25 November to 1 December 2024. The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) calls on the Malaysian government to be more ambitious at this Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee meeting (INC-5) to end plastic pollution.

The global production of primary plastic forecasted to triple to 1,100 million tonnes by 2050 represents a serious crisis. Transforming fossil fuel into plastic resins and additives releases toxic substances. Malaysia plays a significant role in the global plastics and petrochemical industry. Plastic production, use, and end-of-life management threaten the environment and human health with toxic chemicals exposures.

More plastic production means a greater output of toxic chemicals. The key solution to address the impact of plastics is to scale down production and prohibit the use and addition of hazardous chemicals. The industry's narrative of circularity, recycling, and sustainable plastic is misleading. While these concepts sound promising, they do not align with the reality that most plastic waste is not effectively recycled and continues to pollute the environment.

It is difficult to counter the narrative that "more production means more pollution". Claims that plastic production can somehow be sustainable are unrealistic, as increased plastic production will always result in more waste and toxins. Hence global actions to address the plastic crisis are urgently needed.

For the Global Plastics Treaty to be effective in reversing the tide of plastic pollution, mechanisms and solutions to address it need to exist within climate and planetary boundaries. The INC-5 should ensure that the health-protective objectives of the Treaty are supported by meaningful and ambitious global controls, address the full life cycle of plastics, and prioritize the health of vulnerable people, including women, children and youth, and Indigenous Peoples.

In finalizing the negotiations for the future Plastics Treaty, the Malaysian government is urged to support the following, among other elements:

- Control measures are global and not based on individual national commitments. We are facing a global plastics crisis, so the solution needs to be global. An approach based on national rules, as preferred by Malaysia, would make the Treaty largely ineffective and create major trade hurdles, while global measures would create a level playing field for all economic actors.
- The Treaty includes global mechanisms to reduce the production of plastics. Without regulatory interventions, plastic production is projected to increase dramatically, resulting in increasing climate, pollution, and health problems.
- Regulating groups of chemicals to expedite protective measures and reduce risks of hazardous or regrettable substitutions, and using the precautionary principle when there is scientific uncertainty.

- Regulating chemicals throughout the full life cycle of plastics to provide better protection for human health. If chemicals are only regulated in plastic products, large amounts of uses and emissions remain uncontrolled during other stages of the life cycle, such as during production and waste management, which will likely lead to continued exposures for workers and fence-line communities.
- Mandatory, harmonised and transparent reporting across the full lifecycle of plastics. This is particularly essential for measures related to the supply of virgin plastics so that efforts to reduce production and ensure a non-toxic circular economy can be assessed and advanced.
- The Treaty includes strong monitoring and reporting provisions. Reporting is an important measure for effectiveness evaluation and it is necessary to have a clear understanding of plastic pollution trends that include indicators of human health protection, such as biomonitoring of plastic chemicals, microplastics, and nanoplastics.
- The Treaty avoids greenwashing and false solutions such as expansion of waste-to-energy facilities, plastic credits, chemical recycling, alternative plastics and other schemes that can lead to further problems.
- The Treaty includes legally binding, time-bound, and ambitious targets to implement and scale up reuse and refill to accelerate the transition away from single-use plastics.
- When considering existing plastic pollution, the Treaty should prioritize the identification and remediation of hotspots of existing plastic pollution, including at production and waste management/disposal facilities that threaten human health and the environment.
- Just Transition in the Treaty must promote systemic change that upholds human rights and allows communities along the plastic life cycle to live and work with dignity. A just transition must be truly inclusive, from decision-making to implementation, and allow impacted communities to define their own vision for a plastic-free world.
- There is sufficient and predictable funding, and includes mechanisms that apply the polluter pays principle.

CAP and other civil society organizations have provided our input to the Malaysian government, including views of the international networks that we are members of such as the International Pollutants Elimination Network (IPEN) and the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA). We hope that our concerns and suggestions will be seriously considered during the negotiations. We are approaching the final round of negotiations and thus it is imperative that we have a robust treaty that would be effective in ending plastic pollution.

Mohideen Abdul Kader
President
Consumers' Association of Penang