

Médecins Sans Frontières

Geneva, 5 August 2025

To: Mr. Jyoti Mathur-Filipp

Executive Secretary

Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Cc: Mr. Linroy Christian (Antigua and Barbuda)

Mr. Go Kobayashi (Japan)

Co-Facilitators, Group 4 – Health, Trade, and Waste-Related Issues

Subject: *Call for a Strong and Health-Protective Global Plastics Treaty*

Dear Mr. Mathur-Filipp, Mr. Christian, Mr. Kobayashi, and Distinguished Delegates,

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) submits this letter as a medical humanitarian organization committed to protecting health and delivering care in some of the world's most vulnerable settings. We commend the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for its continued efforts to develop a legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution across its full lifecycle.

Health systems worldwide have become increasingly reliant on plastic, particularly in medical care delivery—to the point of dangerous overdependence. Among the most concerning substances is **polyvinyl chloride (PVC)**, whose lifecycle presents serious and well-documented health and environmental risks. While PVC's affordability and flexibility have made it a standard material in healthcare, these short-term benefits are outweighed by its long-term harms: from its fossil fuel-based production to toxic emissions during disposal.

This is especially critical in the low-resource and emergency settings where MSF operates, where incineration and landfilling of PVC-containing medical waste often release dioxins, furans, and other persistent pollutants into the environment, exposing patients, health workers, and communities to preventable risks.

A related concern is **Di-2-ethylhexyl phthalate (DEHP)**, a plasticiser commonly used in PVC medical devices. DEHP is not chemically bound and can leach directly into patients' bodies during treatment, with particularly severe risks for neonates and other vulnerable patients. Despite its known toxicity and the existence of safer alternatives, DEHP remains in widespread use.

This harmful dependence is closely tied to the fossil fuel industry. As plastic production is projected to surge in the coming decades, continued reliance on fossil-based medical plastics will deepen health systems' exposure to unsustainable, hazardous supply chains. The Treaty must therefore go beyond mitigating plastic waste; it must *catalyze a shift toward safer, sustainable materials in healthcare.*

Encouragingly, change is already underway. Health institutions in several countries have successfully phased out high-risk plastics and transitioned to safer products. Supporting

innovation in medical product design and procurement, especially through full material disclosure—is essential to accelerate this shift.

MSF strongly believes that exempting the healthcare sector from Treaty obligations would undermine the Treaty’s purpose and perpetuate preventable harm. We urge the Committee to ensure the healthcare sector is part of the solution, not an exception.

We therefore call on the INC to:

- **Prioritize the elimination of PVC in healthcare**, beginning with the highest-risk products where alternatives already exist.
- **Include PVC and hazardous additives such as DEHP** on the Treaty’s phase-out list.
- **Mandate full material disclosure for medical products** to support informed procurement and drive demand for safer alternatives.

This Treaty represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to protect both public health and the environment from the root causes of plastic pollution. A PVC-free healthcare sector is not only feasible; it is necessary.

We urge you to take bold, time-bound action to reduce health harms from plastics and ensure a just, sustainable future for health systems and the communities they serve.

Thank you for your attention to these urgent matters.

Sincerely,

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)