India Institute for Critical Action Centre in Movement  
Plenary Submission  
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Thank you Mr. Chair. I am Swathi from the Centre for Financial Accountability, India and a member of the Break Free from Plastic, a coalition of 13000 organisations and individuals across the globe.

According to the International Energy Agency’s 2017 report titled ‘Future of Petrochemicals’ and its ‘Oil 2023’ report, the Asia Pacific region is all set to be a critical producer of polymers in the coming years and we are already seen an expansion of production capacities. In the past year, Asia has seen the largest number of extreme weather events as compared to any other region. Right now several of our countries are going through the worst heat wave in centuries. For the past few years we have been in cycles of drought and floods, taking a toll not just on people but also on the economy. Not curbing the production and consumption of polymers and plastics will also take us away from our climate commitments. We are today facing the worst outcomes of fossil fuel led development and we do not but have a choice to make changes such that those most vulnerable communities of our societies are protected.

Over the past 3 days we have heard about how plastics are important for developing countries. However, I would like to say here, that cancer, tuberculosis and skin infections is not the development we citizens need. The development we need is access to affordable and effective health systems. We do not need the destruction of soil and crops, nor the destruction of water bodies and our coasts due to emissions from the polymer producing refineries, which impact the lives and livelhoods of farmers and fishworkers. We do not need the infertility of human being and animals which polymers and plastics are causing. The development we need is instead the right to work. The development we need education and social security for all. So Mr Chair, to the polymer and plastics production, we say, not in my name.

To ensure that we support the developing countries what we truly need from the ILBI is tracking, reporting and monitoring of the production of primary plastic polymers, global targets and national limits for their production and strong measures for trade in both upstream polymers and chemicals, and downstream waste. Transparency and traceability of chemicals of concern is imperative to know the implications of their use, which can help their regulation. Another often heard argument is about how cheap plastics are. It is through subsidies and government support like tax holidays and viability gap funding which buttresses this industry. These need to come to an end. Communities and workers (formal and informal) who have been impacted by the industry and those who will affected by the transition need to be remediated and supported. We hope that the ILBI will ensure strong measures on these obligations. False solution like plastic credits, other market-based mechanisms and waste to energy serve only as distractions from the real problem, which is pollution from the production of polymers and plastics.

We urge the member states to place principles of justice and human rights at the core of the negotiations for the ILBI, which will ensure growth for all rather than furthering profits of a few corporations.