



**Statement of the Congregations of St. Joseph for the Intergovernmental Negotiating  
Committee Session 5 on the Development of an International Legally Binding Instrument on  
Plastic Pollution, including in the Marine Environment**

As Congregations of St. Joseph, representing 10,000 Catholic sisters, we are deeply committed to the care of Earth, our common home. The escalating crisis of plastic pollution presents serious risks to both human health and the environment. Having actively engaged in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee's efforts, we wish to emphasize our hopes and expectations for the upcoming 5th negotiating session in Busan, Republic of Korea.

We strongly advocate for the creation of an ambitious and effective international legally binding treaty that addresses the full life cycle of plastics.

Plastic pollution is a global crisis. Although we prefer the establishment of global sustainability criteria and standards for plastics, we recognize that, in certain instances, it may be necessary to account for common but differentiated responsibilities regarding legacy plastic pollution and the respective capabilities of individual nations.

To be genuinely effective, this treaty must include global, mandatory, and enforceable targets aimed at capping and significantly reducing the production of primary plastics.

While we appreciate the progress made in previous negotiations, particularly regarding waste management and other downstream issues, we believe that addressing these challenges alone will be insufficient to meet the goal of ending plastic pollution by 2040. The treaty must also focus on upstream solutions that target the root causes of plastic pollution.

To that end, we emphasize the need to establish a global list of toxic chemicals and set mandatory global criteria for identifying and prioritizing the phase-out of avoidable plastic products containing harmful substances. Clear, actionable plans for the elimination of these toxic chemicals should be included in the treaty appendices, allowing for swift amendments as science and technology evolve.

Eliminating single-use plastics is a critical step in this transition. We oppose exemptions for plastics used in medical and healthcare settings. While certain products may require a longer phase-out period, we believe this shift can be achieved without compromising healthcare. There is extensive waste generated by the packaging of many healthcare products, and many plastic medical items contain harmful

substances like phthalates, BPA, and PVC. The global volume of these products poses health risks at every stage, from production to disposal. Fortunately, innovative alternatives to plastic are emerging.

Furthermore, we continue to advocate for a treaty that ensures fair wages and protections for waste pickers, shielding them from exposure to toxins and promoting a "just transition" to new employment opportunities as society reduces plastic use and adopts innovative waste management strategies.

As we look toward the future, we remain committed to supporting a treaty that not only addresses the current plastic pollution crisis but also lays the foundation for a sustainable and just future for all.