



August 12, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

Due to technical difficulties on the Indico platform and challenges for the original submitters, the Center for International Environmental Law is writing to submit a series of statements on behalf of a Multifaith Coalition in Support of a Global Legally-Binding Global Plastics Treaty. The statements include messages from the Multifaith Coalition, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Boston College Declaration, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, Rabbi Leonid Feldman, and Rev. Mitchell C. Hescoc.

With regards,

David Azoulay

Managing Attorney, Geneva Office

Center for International Environmental Law



MULTIFAITH COALITION IN SUPPORT OF A LEGALLY BINDING GLOBAL PLASTICS TREATY

11 August 2025

Center for International Environmental Law
15 rue des Savoises
1205 Geneva, Switzerland

Attention: Andrés Del Castillo

Re: Statement on behalf of Multifaith Coalition at INC 5.2

To the Center for International Environmental Law:

Thank you for your gracious offer to upload the Multifaith Coalition's Statement at the second part of the 5th Session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, to develop an internationally legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment (INC 5.2), to UNEP's In-Session Documents Platform containing statements on behalf of groups of observers (<https://www.unep.org/inc-plastic-pollution/session-5.2/statements#GroupsObservers>). Our Statement is attached.

As set out in that Statement, The Multifaith Coalition in Support of a Legally Binding Global Plastics Treaty represents over 30 faith-based organizations and numerous individuals across many traditions, all of whom have endorsed the Coalition's Declaration calling for binding production limits on plastics, strict chemical regulation, and independent scientific oversight. The members of the Coalition, the signatories to our Declaration, are set out in the accompanying statement.

The Coalition also has the honor to transmit to INC 5.2 three important statements from faith leaders: His Holiness the Dalai Lama, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholmew (Eastern Orthodox Church), and Professor Joachim von Braun, President of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences at the Vatican, all addressed specifically to INC 5.2 and included in full in our attached Statement. Our Statement is the only vehicle of which we are aware formally to transmit these important statements to INC 5.2.

The Coalition and our Statement were presented in a formal intervention by Professor David A. Wirth of Boston College Law School, formally accredited as an observer to INC 5.2, on 4 August 2025, directly to INC 5.2 at the Conversation With Observers, organized by UNEP and hosted by Ms Inger Andersen, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, His Excellency Ambassador Luis Vayas Valdivieso, Chair of the INC, and Ms Jyoti Mathur-Filipp, Executive Secretary of the Secretariat of the INC.

Thank you once again, Andrés, for your kind offer to upload our Statement to the UNEP In-Session Documents platform. Please let me know if we may be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Sarah Stimson Karis and the Rev. Kathryn Beilke
Co-Founders, Multifaith Coalition

MULTIFAITH COALITION IN SUPPORT OF A LEGALLY BINDING GLOBAL PLASTICS TREATY

July 31, 2025

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF A LEGALLY BINDING GLOBAL PLASTICS TREATY THAT PROTECTS HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFEGUARDS THE EARTH'S ENVIRONMENT

The Multifaith Coalition in Support of a Legally Binding Global Plastics Treaty appreciates the opportunity to submit this statement to the second part of the fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment (INC-5.2).

The Multifaith Coalition is hosted by the U.S.-based NGO Beyond Plastics (<https://www.beyondplastics.org/faith-beyond-plastics>). The Coalition is an outcome of the international multidisciplinary conference, “Joining Science and Theology to End Plastic Pollution, Protect Health, and Advance Social Justice,” convened by Boston College on October 4–5, 2024. The conference proceedings have been published in the *Journal of Moral Theology*.¹

The Multifaith Coalition is delighted to transmit a statement from His Holiness the Dalai Lama directly to those assembled at INC 5.2, and particularly representatives of states participating in the negotiation of a legally binding instrument, the anticipated outcome:

THE DALAI LAMA

MESSAGE

It is encouraging that the international community is making efforts to resolve the problem caused by the rampant use of plastics and that the next session of Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for United Nations Global Plastic Treaty is being held shortly. Plastic has been a great boon to humanity and has brought us many benefits, but producing far more plastic than we need is having a strong negative impact on all living beings, both human and animal. It is also affecting climate change. Scientific studies have linked exposure to chemicals found in plastic to disease and sometimes death.

We should remember that this small blue planet is our only home, and we have to take care of it in the best possible way for sake of future generations. Also, these days world is so interconnected that no nation can excuse themselves from global responsibility by saying that problems outside their borders do not affect them. Therefore, we should realize that we are a global family sharing responsibility of caring for one another.

1. Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church book series, vol. 7 (A. Vicini, P.J. Landrigan & Karen Bullock eds., June 30, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.55476/001c.141413>, <https://jmt.scholasticahq.com/article/141413-front-matter-ctewc-book-series-vol-7>.

It is impractical to expect total elimination of plastics production because many plastic-based products are essential for health and wellbeing of living beings. However, thoughtless usage needs to be curtailed.

I realize that United Nations Global Plastics Treaty, which is in process drafting will be an opportunity reduce plastics crisis I hope everyone involved process will act wisely produce treaty protects health all living beings safeguards human rights preserves our small blue planet our only home.

With my prayers good wishes,

(signature)

28 July 2025

The Dalai Lama's original message is attached at the end of this declaration.

The Boston College conference adopted a “[Declaration: Our Shared Responsibility to End Plastic Pollution, Protect Human Health, and Advance Social Justice for All](https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/academics/sites/ila/events/Plastic-Pollution-conference.html#tab-declaration)” (<https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/academics/sites/ila/events/Plastic-Pollution-conference.html#tab-declaration>). The Boston College Declaration makes eight principal findings:

- Plastics cause disease, disability, and premature death at every stage of their life cycle in production, use and disposal.
- Plastics endanger human reproduction.
- Plastics damage infants and children.
- Plastic production worsens climate change.
- Plastics threaten human rights.
- Plastic recycling does not work.
- Plastic pollution is a global threat.
- Relentless increases in production are the main driver of plastic's worsening harms.

The Boston College Declaration makes seven recommendations for action. These recommended actions are directly relevant to the issues before the negotiators at INC 5.2:

1. *Production limits.* Mandatory, legally-binding limits on production of new plastic, especially single-use plastics, with targets and timetables must be the core of the Global Plastics Treaty.
2. *Recycling is not the solution.* We cannot recycle our way out of the plastics crisis.
3. *Toxic chemicals.* The Treaty must address the thousands of chemicals in plastics. These chemicals are integral components of all plastics and cannot be excluded from the Treaty. They are responsible for much of the disease and death caused by plastics. They are poorly regulated, and many have never been tested for toxicity. The Treaty must set strict standards for all chemicals in plastics, requiring testing and full disclosure of information on their nature and toxicity, and banning harmful chemicals such as PFAS from food packaging and from goods designed for children.
4. *Extended Producer Responsibility.* The Treaty must mandate Extended Producer Responsibility (take-back) of all plastic products, prohibit most single-use plastics, prohibit chemical recycling in any form, and enhance the infrastructure needed to boost plastic reuse.
5. *Science.* Treaty implementation must be guided by an International Science Advisory Panel independent of the plastics industry.

6. *Funding*. Treaty implementation must be adequately funded. International funding will be required in many low- and middle-income countries.

7. *Monitoring*. Continued monitoring of plastic production, plastic pollution, plastic chemical exposures, and plastics' harms to human health will be essential. Only through transparent monitoring and independent research can progress be assessed, unintended consequences avoided, and course corrections made.

The Boston College Declaration was endorsed by an interfaith group of religious leaders from multiple faith traditions, including by formal statements from His Holiness the Dalai Lama; Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople; Rabbi Leonid Feldman; and The Rev. Mitchell Hescox, President Emeritus of the Evangelical Environmental Network.

The statements of these religious leaders, individually and collectively, send a clear message to negotiators assembled in Geneva. They issue a clarion call for clearly identifiable, meaningful concrete actions that must be included in the internationally legally binding instrument emerging from this critical meeting:

His Holiness the Dalai Lama: “Each and every one of us living on this planet has the responsibility to do our part. [The Boston College] conference is serving a very useful purpose from this perspective in sensitizing individuals, organizations, and governments about *the importance of doing away with plastic for the good of humanity*.”²

Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople: “Not only have we polluted our oceans and our waters with plastic, but we have even compromised our health and jeopardized our brothers and sisters. Plastics no longer merely surround us; they permeate our body, pervade our population, and penetrate our planet. What we desperately need is not just cleaner products or more sustainable packaging. We need a new worldview and a new way of living. *Limiting single-use plastics and avoiding over-production of plastics are important steps along a journey that leads back to the heart and its choices*.”³

Rabbi Leonid Feldman: “Tikkun Olam means that we, humans, have the responsibility to work towards healing the environment and to serve as much as we can as good stewards of God's creation. . . . *Most importantly, we must work through the United Nations to craft a Global Plastic Treaty that protects human health and safeguards human rights by limiting global plastic production, especially the production of single-use plastics, and also addressing the thousands of toxic and unregulated chemicals in plastics*.”⁴

The Rev. Mitchell Hescox, Evangelical Environmental Network: “Climate change is the most significant global health threat facing the world in the 21st century, but it is also the most incredible opportunity to redefine the social and environmental determinants of health.’ Plastic pollution is a close second, for me, after climate change, because *plastic pollution may result in life-altering changes in our genetic makeup, including our ability to reproduce. Hence, the . . . good news is that if we end our addiction to fossil fuels, we can reduce both threats to human health*.”⁵

The Boston College Declaration now boasts 125 signatories, including the approximately 85 researchers and faculty who attended the conference, among them a former Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

2. Id. at 144-45 (emphasis supplied).

3. Id. at 143 (emphasis supplied).

4. Id. at 140-141 (emphasis supplied).

5. Id. at 137 (quoting *Lancet* Commission on Climate Change and Human Health) (emphasis supplied).

The Multifaith Coalition has extended the work of the Boston College Declaration online, inviting the public around the world to join in its interfaith efforts to combat plastic pollution. We are delighted to announce today that the membership of the Coalition currently stands at over 30 faith-based organizations and an equal number of individuals. The Coalition is an ongoing undertaking, and invites new members, both organizations and individuals to join by signing the Declaration, which remains open for signature on its website.⁶

Accordingly, the following Coalition members individually and collectively transmit to the INC 5.2 negotiators the following statement:

“Multifaith Declaration on the Global Plastics Treaty”

“The time is now for faith communities to come together to address the moral urgency of plastic pollution. We the undersigned, as people of faith and conscience, are pleading as our earth and her most vulnerable inhabitants cry out. If we wish to leave a habitable planet for our children and our children’s children, a Global Plastics Treaty must prioritize human health, safeguard the environment, and advance human rights.

“This Treaty must:

“1. Set mandatory, legally binding limits on production of new plastic, especially single-use plastics, with targets and timetables.

“2. Establish strict regulation of the thousands of chemicals in plastics, which include known human carcinogens, neurotoxicants, endocrine-disrupting chemicals, and hundreds more that have never been tested for toxicity.

“3. Be guided by an International Science Advisory Panel independent of the plastics Industry.”

Respectfully submitted,

Multifaith Coalition in Support of a Legally Binding Global Plastic Treaty

On behalf of (as of July 31, 2025):

**Coalition Members
Organizations**

IKAR Jewish Community, Los Angeles CA
Green Anglicans, South Africa
The Interfaith Center of New York
Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Dominican Sisters of Sparkill, NY
Interfaith Public Health Network
Jones Memorial United Methodist Church, Washington, DC
St. Marks United Methodist Church, Brooklyn NY
Boston College
Sisters of Charity of New York
Church Women United in New York State
Upaya Zen Center, Santa Fe, New Mexico

6. <https://www.beyondplastics.org/faith-beyond-plastics>

Fourth Universalist Society in the City of New York
Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, Washington DC
Second Presbyterian Church, New York, NY
Presbyterians for Earth Care
First Parish Unitarian Universalists, Brewster, MA
Capital Region Interfaith Creation Care Coalition, Albany, NY
Rochester Mennonite Fellowship, Rochester, NY
Rochester Area Interfaith Climate Action, Rochester, NY
Albany Presbytery Peacemaking, Albany NY
Live Oak Friends Meeting, Salinas, CA
Peacham Congregational Church, Peacham VT
Hilltop United Methodist Church, Mankato, MN
Barelra Movement
United Religions Initiative
St. James Presbyterian Church, Harlem, NY
Denver Presbytery, Denver CO
UUCC Climate Action, Kingston, NY
St. Peter's Presbyterian Church, Spencertown, NY

Individuals

Rev. Dr. Rachel Mash, South Africa
Peace Ambassador Ardash Warman, Uttar Pradesh , India
Rev. Dr. Janice Katouby, Maine, USA
Rev. Larry Deiss, New York, USA
Rev. Dr. Chloe Brayer, New York, USA
Sister Dorothy Scesny, New York, USA
Rev. Dr. Daniel Carlson, New York, USA
Sister Alice Pencavel, New York, USA
Sister Eileen Gannon, New York, USA
Sister Mary Catherine Rice, Illinois, USA
Rev. Kathi Jones, New York, USA
Rev. Dr. Earl Johnson, New York, USA
Professor Bee Newell, New York, USA
Dr. Phil Landrigan, Massachusetts, USA
Rev. Geraldine Proctor, New York, USA
Rabbi Judith Edelstein, New York, USA
Rev. Sharee Wharton, New York, USA
Dr. Stephanie Putzier, New York, USA
Rev. Dr. Andrew Vidich, New York, USA
Hazzan Risa Wallach, New Jersey, USA
Sister Carol De Angelo, New York, USA
Abbot Roshi Joan, New Mexico, USA
Rabbi Fred Sherlinder Dobb, Washington DC, USA
Rev. Thia Reggio, New York, USA
Rev. Dr. Frederick Weidmann, New York, USA
Rev. Sandra Londa, Texas, USA
Rev. Dr. KC Lee, California, USA
Rev. Dr. Brandan Eddy, Missouri, USA
Rev. Dr. Derrick McQueen, New York, USA

Rev. Lauren VanHamm, USA
Rev. Donna Elia, New York, USA
Sister Elizabeth Bower, Ohio, USA

Attachments:

Statement of the His Holiness the Dalai Lama to INC 5.2, July 28, 2025

Declaration: Our Shared Responsibility to End Plastic Pollution, Protect Human Health, and Advance Social Justice for All (Boston College Declaration)

A Message from Tibetan Buddhism (The Dalai Lama)

A Message from the Eastern Orthodox Church (His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew)

A Message from Judaism (Rabbi Leonid Feldman)

A Moral Roadmap for Ending the Global Plastics Crisis (Rev. Mitchell C. Hescox)

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THE DALAI LAMA

MESSAGE

It is encouraging that the international community is making efforts to resolve the problem caused by the rampant use of plastics and that the next session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the United Nations Global Plastic Treaty is being held shortly. Plastic has been a great boon to humanity and has brought us many benefits, but producing far more plastic than we need is having a strong negative impact on all living beings, both human and animal. It is also affecting climate change. Scientific studies have linked exposure to chemicals found in plastic to disease and sometimes death.

We should remember that this small blue planet is our only home, and we have to take care of it in the best possible way for the sake of future generations. Also, these days the world is so interconnected that no nation can excuse themselves from global responsibility by saying that problems outside their borders do not affect them. Therefore, we should realize that we are a global family sharing the responsibility of caring for one another.

It is impractical to expect the total elimination of plastics production because many plastic-based products are essential for the health and wellbeing of living beings. However, the thoughtless usage of plastic needs to be curtailed.

I realize that the United Nations Global Plastics Treaty, which is in the process of being drafted, will be an opportunity to reduce the plastics crisis. I hope everyone involved in the process will act wisely to produce a treaty that protects the health of all living beings, safeguards human rights, and preserves our small blue planet, our only home.

With my prayers and good wishes,

28 July 2025

15. Declaration: Our Shared Responsibility to End Plastic Pollution, Protect Human Health, and Advance Social Justice for All

Conference Participants

Boston College convened an international Conference on October 4–5, 2024: “Joining Science and Theology to End Plastic Pollution, Protect Health, and Advance Social Justice.” Scientists, ethicists, lawyers, economists, engineers, policy makers, and religious leaders participated. This conference took place one month before the fifth and final round of negotiations for the United Nations Global Plastics Treaty. The main conclusions of the conference: Continuing unchecked increases in plastic production are unethical and immoral. Continuing increases in plastic production are responsible for damages that threaten all life on earth. Those who advocate for unchecked growth in plastics must re-examine their behavior, embrace the reality that the earth is a shared inheritance— a gift from the Creator—and work toward a more equitable and sustainable future.

Conference participants and all who have signed this Declaration urge the UN treaty negotiators to recognize that current patterns of plastic production cannot continue. We urge the negotiators to craft a treaty that prioritizes human health, safeguards the environment, and advances human rights.

The Conference adopted the following findings and recommendations:

Findings

1. *Plastics cause disease, disability, and premature death at every stage of their life cycle—in production, use, and disposal.* People who use plastics are exposed to the more than 16,000 synthetic chemicals that Our Shared Responsibility 153 are in plastics and leak out. Many of these chemicals are highly toxic. They include carcinogens, neurotoxicants, and endocrine disruptors. They are responsible for widespread human exposure and for disease in people of all ages. Workers who make plastics suffer increased rates of cancer as well as pulmonary, metabolic and neurologic diseases. Microplastic particles are linked to increased risks for heart disease, stroke, and death. The diseases caused by plastics result in annual costs of \$675 billion in the USA and \$1.2 trillion globally. These great costs are larger than the GDPs of many countries.
2. *Plastics endanger human reproduction.* Toxic chemicals in plastics, notably endocrine-disrupting phthalates, are associated with male reproductive birth defects. They are linked to global declines in sperm counts and to decreased human fertility. These damages threaten humanity’s future.
3. *Plastics damage infants and children.* Children are at very high risk of toxic injury from plastic chemicals. Even low-level exposure can cause permanent injury. Exposures in pregnancy are especially dangerous and are linked to prematurity, stillbirth, low birth weight, birth defects, neurodevelopmental disorders and childhood leukemia.

4. *Plastic production worsens climate change.* Nearly ninety-nine percent of plastics are made from fossil fuels—crude oil, fracked gas and coal. Plastic production generates nearly two billion tons (two Gigatons) of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases each year— more than the annual emissions of Brazil.
5. *Plastics threaten human rights.* Plastics’ harms are unjustly distributed. Groups at increased risk include: people of color, Indigenous populations, fossil fuel extraction workers, chemical and plastic production workers, informal waste and recovery workers, Our Shared Responsibility 154 and persons living in communities near plastic production facilities. The disproportionate exposures of these vulnerable populations are immoral. They are environmental injustices. They are violations of human rights.
6. *Plastic recycling does not work.* Only seven to eight percent of plastic is recycled. Despite much effort, plastic recycling lags far behind paper, glass, and aluminum recycling and is not improving. The problem is not careless behavior by individuals. The problem lies with plastics themselves. Plastics are complex, they contain multiple toxic chemicals, and they resist recycling. Contrary to the claims of the plastic industry, and despite much effort and investment, “advanced recycling,” “chemical recycling” and “plastic pyrolysis” are failed technologies.
7. *Plastic pollution is a global threat.* Because plastic is persistent in the environment and little is recycled, nearly six billion tons of plastic waste now pollute the planet. Much is in the ocean, where it washes up on beaches, endangers whales, kills seabirds, and breaks down into microplastic particles. Microplastic particles enter the food chain and are consumed by people.
8. *Relentless increases in production are the main driver of plastic’s worsening harms.* Annual plastic output has grown more than 200- fold—from two million tons in 1950 to over 400 million tons today. Half of all plastic ever made has been produced since 2000. Production is on track to double by 2040 and triple by 2060. Single- use plastic accounts for thirty-five to forty percent of current output. Its manufacture is increasing rapidly, and contributes disproportionately to plastic waste.

Recommendations

1. *Production limits.* Mandatory, legally-binding limits on production of new plastic, especially single-use plastics, with targets and timetables must be the core of the Global Plastics Treaty.
2. *Recycling is not the solution.* We cannot recycle our way out of the plastics crisis.
3. *Toxic chemicals.* The Treaty must address the thousands of chemicals in plastics. These chemicals are integral components of all plastics and cannot be excluded from the Treaty. They are responsible for much of the disease and death caused by plastics. They are poorly regulated, and many have never been tested for safety or toxicity. The Treaty must set strict standards for all chemicals in plastics, requiring testing and full disclosure of information on their nature and

toxicity, and banning harmful chemicals such as PFAS from food packaging and from goods designed for children.

4. *Extended Producer Responsibility.* The Treaty must mandate Extended Producer Responsibility (take-back) of all plastic products, prohibit most single-use plastics, prohibit chemical recycling in any form, and enhance the infrastructure needed to boost plastic reuse.
5. *Science.* Treaty implementation must be guided by an International Science Advisory Panel independent of the plastics industry.
6. *Funding.* Treaty implementation must be adequately funded. International funding will be required in many low- and middle- income countries.
7. *Monitoring.* Continued monitoring of plastic production, plastic pollution, plastic chemical exposures, and plastics' harms to human health will be essential. Only through transparent monitoring and independent research can progress be assessed, unintended consequences avoided, and course corrections made.

Conclusion

Plastic is not an isolated problem. Like climate change, air pollution, and escalating inequality, the plastics crisis is a social and ethical challenge. It is another example of humanity's reckless strip-mining of the earth's resources and mortgaging of our common future for short-term economic gain.

To effectively confront the plastics crisis and the other great challenges of our age, we need to develop legal and technical solutions such as the UN Global Plastics Treaty. But additionally, we must at a deeper level reexamine our relationships with each other and with the earth. We must recognize that we are all connected with one other and with the planet. All of us, and especially those who lead governments, international organizations, and major corporations, have a shared responsibility to be good stewards of God's creation. We need to embrace a new approach that transforms our way of living in the world, our lifestyles, our relationship with the earth's resources, and generally how we look at humanity and all life. Such an approach is essential if we wish to leave a habitable planet for our children, our children's children, and the generations yet to come.

12. A Message from Tibetan Buddhism

The Dalai Lama

I am pleased to send my warm greetings to participants of the conference on "Joining Science and Theology to End Plastic Pollution, Protect Health, and Advance Social Justice."

When I was growing up in Tibet, it was natural for Tibetans on the road to stop by a river when thirsty and drink water without any hesitation. Tibet then was fortunate to have a clean environment and so the purity of the river water was certain. It was only when I had to leave Tibet and in the years that passed by when I was made to understand that one should not be drinking from the rivers as they would be polluted. Over the years, in my meetings with ecologists, environmentalists, and scientists, I learned that this is a very serious matter.

Similarly, modern science informs us that something like plastic that has been useful in our daily life is also a dangerous pollutant that threatens life on this planet. All of us are the same in desiring happiness and not wanting suffering. Therefore, ignoring the negative impact of plastics and misusing them for short-term purposes is going to cost humanity greatly in the long run. From that viewpoint, the key thing is the need to have a sense of Universal Responsibility, the real source of happiness.

Also, in consideration of our future generations, we must do our best not to exploit every available thing, including plastics. With a genuine sense of universal responsibility, as the central motivation and principle, we must ensure that the direction of our relations with the environment must be well balanced.

It is also encouraging *that* the UN has over the years expanded its task to take on the challenge of safeguarding the long-term health of our planet and ourselves. Each and every one of us living on this planet has the responsibility to do our part. Your conference is serving a very useful purpose from this perspective in sensitizing individuals, organizations, and governments about the importance of doing away with plastic for the good of humanity.

With my prayers and good wishes for the success of the conference.

The fourteenth **Dalai Lama** is the highest spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism.

11. A Message from Eastern Orthodox Church

His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew

Distinguished organizers and esteemed participants, it is truly a privilege to address you from a distance on the vital subject of Plastic Pollution that you are discussing at Boston College on October 4-5, 2024. During your conference, entitled "Joining Science and Theology to End Plastic Pollution, Protect Health, and Advance Social Justice," you will consider numerous aspects of this challenge, including the critical relationship between science and religion in our age, as well as the urgent need to advance public health and social justice in our world.

For more than thirty years, the Ecumenical Patriarchate has underlined the imperative to preserve the natural environment, protecting its resources from destructive and detrimental chemical materials. We have also emphasized that we can only hope to resolve or expect to restrain the climate crisis with the collective and collaborative effort of all academic disciplines and social domains.

Above all, we have highlighted the intimate and essential relationship between what goes on around us and what goes on inside us. Because the way we perceive creation is the way that we will inevitably handle creation. If we appreciate our world as something ephemeral and expedient, then we will naturally treat it as something marketable and profitable. But if we approach our world as something invaluable and spiritual—that is to say, as something that we received as a gift from above and from our ancestors, but also as something we should refer to God in thanksgiving while handing down to our children in love—then we will invariably respect it as something far greater than us and our interests.

Dear friends, beyond the awareness that we must radically change our attitude and behavior, what has changed in recent years is the reaction of nature itself to our careless actions and insensitive behaviors. We have learned that not only are we inseparably interconnected as human beings, but also that what happens outside us is integrally related to what exists inside us. Not only have we polluted our oceans and our waters with plastic, but we have even compromised our health and jeopardized our brothers and sisters. Plastics no longer merely surround us; they permeate our body, pervade our population, and penetrate our planet. What we desperately need is not just cleaner products or more sustainable packaging. We need a new worldview and a new way of living. Limiting single-use plastics and avoiding over-production of plastics are important steps along a journey that leads back to the heart and its choices.

I wish you every blessing and success in your work.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew is the spiritual leader of Eastern Orthodox Christians. He has been the Patriarch of Constantinople since 1991.

10. A Message from Judaism

Rabbi Leonid Feldman

I believe that the idea of joining science and theology in the struggle to end plastic pollution is very appropriate. In chapter two of the Book of Genesis, at the very beginning of the Bible, we read "The Lord God took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden, to till it and tend it." This verse is one of many in the Bible which clearly express God's concern for preserving nature. It is obvious that all the great crises confronting humanity today are the results of human choices and the consequences of human actions.

A fundamental concept in Judaism, which has become very well-known is Tikkun Olam, which means the "Repairing of the World." It is a concept that has been mentioned by almost every American president in the last fifty years. Tikkun Olam means that we, humans, have the responsibility to work towards healing the environment and to serve as much as we can as good stewards of God's creation.

Now how does Tikkun Olam relate to plastics? The connection lies in plastics' increasingly visible harms to God's creation, in plastics' pollution of the lands and the ocean, in the harm plastics cause to whales and seabirds, and the disease, disability, and death that plastics cause in people of all ages. We cannot allow these evils to continue. We have a responsibility to intervene, to help repair this damaged world.

Each one of us must first take personal action to reduce these harms, for example, by using less plastic in our daily lives, like the plastic water bottles that we all use and just throw out, and so on. But beyond the personal, we also have a responsibility to address the dangers of plastics at a systemic, societal level, in the cities, states, provinces where we live, in our countries, and even internationally. We must work with legislators to create laws and policies that will reduce plastics' harms to human health and the environment—for example, by banning most single-use plastics and requiring manufacturers to take back and reuse plastic products.

Most importantly, we must work through the United Nations to craft a Global Plastic Treaty that protects human health and safeguards human rights by limiting global plastic production, especially the production of single-use plastics, and also addressing the thousands of toxic and unregulated chemicals in plastics.

Hence, I urge the delegates from nations around the world who will gather this year to finalize the Global Plastic Treaty to write a treaty that protects the health of all living beings, safeguards human rights, and heals our wounded world.

Rabbi Leonid Feldman is a Soviet-born American Conservative Jewish rabbi. From 2005 to 2022 he was the spiritual leader of Temple Beth El in West Palm Beach, Florida. He is the host of the podcast "Ask the Rabbi."

9. A Moral Roadmap for Ending the Global Plastics Crisis

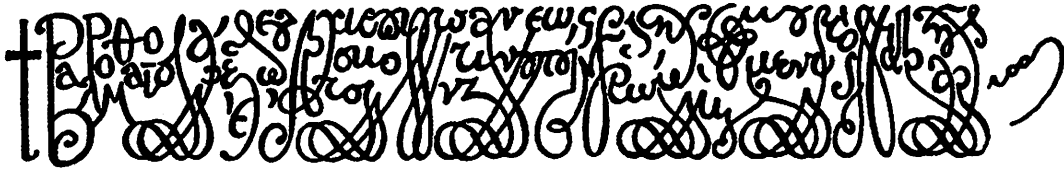
Rev. Mitchell C. Hescox

ABSTRACT⁷

By relying on his evangelical commitments, encounters, and experiences, this chapter engages the difficult task of raising awareness of the gravity of the climate crisis and plastic pollution. An increased awareness should lead to concrete actions aimed at protecting the environment and addressing the ongoing global climate crisis. To foster awareness and support actions, it interprets key Scriptural passages, articulates the evangelical commitment to protect life, and integrates contributions which depend on his training in Family Systems Theory. The outcome is a moral roadmap for responding to the global plastics crisis and, hopefully, ending it.

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7. The full text of Dr. Hescox's detailed and thoughtful contribution to the conference proceedings can be found at <https://jmt.scholasticahq.com/article/141268-a-moral-roadmap-for-ending-the-global-plastics-crisis>.



STATEMENT ON PLASTICS

By His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew

On the occasion of Session 5.2 of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the United Nations Global Plastic Treaty, we would like to offer the support of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople for the vital efforts to preserve the natural environment from the detrimental consequences of plastics.

For decades we have highlighted the intimate and inextricable relationship between what goes on around us and what goes on inside us. After all, the way we perceive creation is the way that we inevitably handle it. If we appreciate our world as something ephemeral and expedient, then we will naturally treat our planet as something commercial and marketable. But if we approach our world as something unique and spiritual—as a gift from God above and from our ancestors in the past to be handed down to our children in a legacy of love—then we will invariably respect it as something far greater than us and our narrow interests.

Through our insensitive attitudes and careless actions, we have created far more plastics and single-use goods than we need or can possibly manage. We now know that plastic waste not only pollutes mountains, forests, cities, and oceans, but that it harms the most

vulnerable among us by breaking down into minute particles that enter and pollute the bodies of every living creature.

It is our fervent hope and prayer that we will drastically convert our worldview and ways, recognizing that we are all interrelated as human beings and with the rest of creation. Avoiding single-use plastics and reducing the over-production of plastics are critical steps along the journey of sustaining our planet and its precious resources.



In Support of Science and Policy Action to End Plastic Pollution, Protect Human Health, and Advance Social Justice for All

Prof. Joachim von Braun, President of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, The Vatican, August 1, 2025

The Pontifical Academy of Sciences at the Vatican is deeply concerned about environmental degradation and its negative consequences for human health and social equity. The Academy regularly engages in scientific and policy dialogues and issues calls to action on these pressing matters (see: <https://www.pas.va/en/events/statements.html>).

One major area of concern is the excessive use of plastics and their direct and indirect impacts on ecosystems, pollution levels, biodiversity, human well-being, and the climate. While there are beneficial uses for environmentally safe plastics, addressing the plastic crisis demands a holistic approach—one rooted in a profound ethic of care for our common home, not merely marginal adjustments. As Pope Leo XIV emphasized: “...to ‘till and keep’ the garden of the world [cf. Gen 2:15]. ‘Tilling’ refers to cultivating, ploughing or working, while ‘keeping’ means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving. This implies a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature.” (*Message of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV for the 10th World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, 1 September 2025*)

<https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/messages/creation/documents/20250630-messaggio-giornata-curacreato.html>

Plastics have become deeply embedded in modern society and the global economy, yet they are a growing source of pollution. Chemicals associated with plastics are entering the human body, and micro- and nanoplastics (MNPs) have been detected in human organs. A substantial and growing body of scientific evidence shows the harmful health effects of these chemicals, including those found in MNPs. To protect human and environmental health, it is imperative to eliminate hazardous plastic-associated chemicals, ban MNPs in personal care products, and promote the use of sustainable plastics with simplified and safer chemical compositions.

The Global Plastics Treaty, now in its final negotiation phase, presents a critical opportunity for a legally binding international agreement to tackle plastic pollution and its impact on human health. The treaty must be science-based and include actionable recommendations that address both the chemical and particulate aspects of plastics throughout their life cycle.

Urgent steps are needed to significantly reduce the global burden of plastic pollution. This includes limiting the production of new plastics, particularly single-use items. The treaty must also address the thousands of chemicals used in plastics by establishing strict safety standards and banning harmful substances such as PFAS, especially in food packaging and products intended for children. Implementation of the treaty must be guided by independent scientific expertise, which must be adequately resourced. Public engagement by all of us is vital. Education in ecological awareness and responsible behavior regarding plastic use must be a core element of this global effort.

August 5, 2025

STATEMENT OF

DAVID A. WIRTH, PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL LAW. BOSTON COLLEGE LAW SCHOOL

on behalf of

MULTIFAITH COALITION IN SUPPORT OF A LEGALLY BINDING GLOBAL PLASTICS TREATY

SECOND PART OF THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATING
COMMITTEE (INC 5.2) TO DEVELOP AN INTERNATIONAL LEGALLY BINDING INSTRUMENT
ON PLASTIC POLLUTION, INCLUDING IN THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

My name is David Wirth, Professor of International Law at Boston College Law School.

I am honored to speak to you today on behalf of the Multifaith Coalition in Support of a Legally Binding Global Plastics Treaty.

The Coalition's Declaration, included in its written statement submitted to the Secretariat, has been endorsed by over 30 faith-based and religious organizations, and numerous individuals. This Declaration calls for binding production limits, strict chemical regulation, and independent scientific oversight.

Today the Coalition has honor to transmit to this session the powerful message of three religious leaders - His Holiness the Dalai Lama, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of the Orthodox Church, and Professor Joachim von Braun, President of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences in the Vatican - all addressed specifically to INC 5.2, which we respectfully submit to this body.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama reminds us that overproduction of plastics now threatens all life. He calls on us to recognize that we are one global family sharing one fragile planet.

His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew exhorts that "Avoiding single use plastics and reducing the over-production of plastics are critical steps along the journey of sustaining our planet and its precious resources."

Professor von Braun, referencing Pope Leo XIV, is even more specific. He states that urgently needed steps "include limiting the production of new plastics" and addressing "the thousands of chemicals used in plastics by establishing strict safety standards and banning harmful substances such as PFAS, especially in food packaging and products intended for children. Implementation of the treaty must be guided by independent scientific expertise, which must be adequately resourced."

The message we carry today is not confined to any one tradition. It is grounded in moral and ethical principles—care for the vulnerable, stewardship of the Earth, and responsibility to future generations -- that transcend religious boundaries and are shared across cultures, philosophies, and belief systems. These values speak to all. This is a call to our collective conscience, arising from a shared commitment to justice, health, and the well-being of our fragile planet.

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