

Rotterdam, 21 September 2026

ISWA Written Views on Cluster B for the Second Informal In-person Meeting of Heads of Delegation to the INC on Plastic Pollution

Scheduled for 27–30 September 2026

The International Solid Waste Association (ISWA)'s contribution to Cluster B draws on its previous submissions to the INC process and practical insights from ISWA National Members through the **Breaking the Plastic Pollution Cycle** initiative. These experiences highlight the need to address plastic pollution across the full plastics lifecycle. **The plastic pollution cycle is driven by the disconnect between increasing plastic production and consumption and the systems available to prevent waste, collect, sort, recycle, recover and safely manage plastics throughout their lifecycle.** Addressing this challenge requires coordinated upstream and downstream measures, supported by clear, actionable and verifiable commitments and implementation pathways that reflect different national circumstances.

1. What considerations should guide decisions on determining which plastic products will require possible global measures, actions or cooperation?

Decisions should follow a **lifecycle approach**, considering both product characteristics and their implications for prevention, reuse, recycling, environmentally sound management and leakage prevention. Particular consideration should be given to products that are unnecessary or problematic; short-lived or non-essential single-use products; products containing chemicals of concern or hazardous substances; intentionally added microplastics; and products or materials that present challenges for reuse, recycling or environmentally sound management. Product measures should promote durability, reusability and recyclability while reducing unnecessary complexity and supporting safe and sustainable product design.

Importantly, **technical recyclability alone does not ensure circularity**; assessments should also consider collection and separation feasibility, viable recycling pathways, material quality, available technologies and the existence of markets for secondary materials. Different plastic streams may therefore require different pathways, as low-value, complex, contaminated, difficult-to-recycle or non-recyclable plastics can remain economically and environmentally challenging even where collection infrastructure exists.

Producer responsibility should complement these measures by addressing end-of-life costs and responsibilities while incentivising more circular product design. Aligning product design requirements with robust extended producer responsibility (EPR) systems, including eco-modulation of fees, can encourage more sustainable product choices and support financing of downstream management systems.

A potential area of convergence could be the establishment of **common lifecycle-based criteria for identifying products requiring global measures**, supported where appropriate by internationally consistent product design standards, while allowing measures to reflect the characteristics, applications and end-of-life realities of different products. Such an approach would establish common expectations for durability, reusability and recyclability while linking upstream product decisions with their practical downstream consequences.

2. What type of enabling factors should be considered to address existing and legacy plastic pollution, including the process to identify and evaluate the locations or accumulation zones and subsequent remediation efforts?



Addressing existing and legacy plastic pollution requires both action on accumulated pollution and measures that prevent continued leakage and renewed accumulation. ISWA emphasises **universal waste collection and environmentally sound management as core leakage prevention strategies**. Plastic leakage is associated with production-related sources such as pellets, flakes and powders and activities such as fishing, as well as with uncollected waste, littering and inadequate disposal. Particular attention is also required for agricultural plastics and unmanaged waste in rural and informal settings. Rehabilitation of open dumpsites and their integration into formal environmentally sound waste management systems are therefore important to prevent further accumulation.

Effective identification and evaluation of leakage pathways and accumulation areas require **reliable data, monitoring, traceability and information exchange**. Traceability mechanisms across the plastics value chain, from design and production through collection, recycling, recovery and disposal, can strengthen the evidence base for prioritising interventions. Transparent registers can help compare quantities placed on the market with downstream management performance, while strengthened international monitoring cooperation can support implementation and continuous improvement.

Monitoring plastic waste generation or consumption on a per-capita basis can help identify hotspots and guide targeted interventions. Such approaches should take national circumstances into account to avoid placing disproportionate burdens on countries with comparatively low levels of plastic consumption.

National experiences further demonstrate that plastic pollution pathways can be **transboundary**, particularly through rivers, while international movements of plastic waste can create additional risks where appropriate treatment and traceability are lacking. Cooperation on monitoring, information exchange and coordinated interventions is therefore important where pollution pathways cross national boundaries.

A potential area of convergence could be a framework linking **identification and monitoring of hotspots, risk-based prioritisation of interventions, targeted remediation, international cooperation where pollution is transboundary, and measures preventing renewed accumulation**. Remediation efforts should be supported by adequate financing, institutional and technical capacity, and environmentally sound systems for managing recovered materials.

3. How can Parties cooperate in the implementation of effective waste management policies, taking into account the different national circumstances and needs?

Parties could cooperate around **common waste management objectives while allowing context-appropriate implementation pathways**. There is no single waste management model suitable for every country or every plastic stream. ISWA has consistently emphasised that solutions should reflect socioeconomic and cultural conditions, build on existing systems and avoid transferring approaches that are unsuitable to local circumstances.

Common objectives should include waste prevention, universal collection, source separation, reuse and recycling where appropriate, phasing out uncontrolled dumping and open burning, and environmentally sound management of residual waste. National waste management policies should follow the waste hierarchy, prioritising prevention, followed by reuse and recycling, while recognising that not all plastics can be effectively recycled and recirculated and that residual fractions require environmentally sound management.

National experiences demonstrate that infrastructure alone is insufficient. Effective implementation also requires **coherent governance, reliable data, enforcement, institutional and municipal capacity, sustainable financing, stakeholder participation and**



viable markets for secondary materials. Collection and recycling targets alone will not deliver circularity where recovered materials lack sufficient quality, economically viable processing pathways or markets capable of returning them to productive use.

International cooperation should therefore address implementation gaps through capacity building, technical assistance, financing, knowledge exchange and appropriate technologies and infrastructure. This support should reflect differences in waste streams, existing systems, institutional capacity and economic conditions.

Cooperation should also be **inclusive across the value chain**. Municipalities, producers, waste management operators, recyclers, communities, civil society and informal waste workers all have roles to play in effective systems. National experiences show that informal recovery can already make an important contribution to recycling while workers may remain insufficiently integrated and socially vulnerable. Implementation pathways should therefore build on functioning local systems while supporting their progressive improvement and formalisation where appropriate.

A potential area of convergence could therefore be agreement on **common outcomes for environmentally sound plastic waste management, combined with nationally appropriate implementation pathways and adequate international support**. This can provide a shared direction while recognising differences in infrastructure, institutional capacity, economic conditions, waste streams and existing systems.

Conclusions & Way Forward

Breaking the plastic pollution cycle requires coordinated action across the plastics lifecycle, connecting prevention and product design with effective waste management and remediation of legacy pollution. Experiences from ISWA National Members demonstrate that while common objectives and principles are essential, implementation pathways must reflect different waste streams, capacities, infrastructure, governance structures and socioeconomic contexts. Achieving practical impact will require clear, actionable and verifiable commitments supported by financing, capacity building, knowledge exchange and international cooperation.

The waste management sector brings essential implementation expertise and operational realities to the treaty discussions, helping bridge global commitments with practical action on the ground. **To strengthen this contribution, ISWA invites interested accredited observer organisations to participate in a coalition aimed at strengthening coordination, amplifying evidence-based perspectives and supporting a stronger collective voice of the waste management sector throughout the negotiations.** Observer organisations interested in contributing are invited to engage with ISWA and explore opportunities for cooperation throughout the treaty process.

ISWA remains committed to supporting Parties and stakeholders in translating global commitments into practical implementation through its global network, technical expertise and evidence-based contributions.

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