

Conference Room Paper on behalf of Rwanda and Peru

Global Target for the Production of Primary Plastic Polymers

In March 2022, countries adopted UNEA Resolution 5/14 with the mandate to promote sustainable production and consumption of plastics based on a comprehensive approach that addresses the full lifecycle of plastic.

The production of primary plastic polymers is a key reference against which to measure the impact of interventions across the full lifecycle of plastic. The effectiveness of both supply- and demand-side measures will be assessed, in whole or in part, on their success in reducing the production of primary plastic polymers to sustainable levels. For these reasons, it is appropriate to set out a global reduction target - a North Star - on the production of primary plastic polymers to benchmark our collective actions.

In considering a global reduction target, essential elements include:

Transparency Framework

Transparency on the production of primary plastic polymers has independent value for the implementation of the international legally binding instrument (ILBI), necessary to close information gaps, assess progress and inform priorities, among other things. In the design of the transparency framework, particularly as it relates to the production of primary plastic polymers, relevant considerations include: (i) obligation to provide statistical data on production, imports and exports of primary plastic polymers for the baseline year [e.g. 2025] within a specified time of becoming a Party, or best estimates where such data is unavailable; (ii) mandatory reporting of statistical data on production, imports and exports of primary plastic polymers; and (iii) empowerment of the governing body to adopt the format for submission, including quantities (e.g. weight) and types.

Global Reduction Target

The ILBI should set out a global reduction target to achieve sustainable levels of production and consumption of plastics and protect human health and the environment – similar to 1.5°C in the Paris Agreement and 30% by 2030 in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. The target should align with our objectives for a safe circular economy for plastics by closing the circularity gap between production and consumption. It should also align with our objective in the Paris Agreement to limit warming to 1.5°C. To this end, one such global reduction target could be a 40% reduction by 2040 (40x40) against a 2025 baseline.

Start and Strengthen

The work of ending plastic pollution is a generational undertaking. Therefore, the structure of the ILBI should contain a start-and-strengthen mechanism for adjusting control measures over time via decisions of the Conference of the Parties, without the need for additional amendment or ratification, particularly when it comes to eliminating or adjusting limits on specified polymers. This approach mirrors that taken in the Montreal Protocol on Substances That Deplete the Ozone Layer and Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, among others. Such an approach will ensure delivery against the global reduction target in the context of what is reasonable now, while recognizing that ambition can be increased as more information becomes available and other interventions across the lifecycle of plastic take effect, ensuring ongoing relevancy and flexibility of the ILBI into the future.

Conclusion

A global target for the production of primary plastic polymers is a core element of the new ILBI, providing a guiding conceptual framework for the design of both supply - and demand-side policy measures and a reference to measure our collective progress towards our shared objective of ending plastic pollution.