TO: UNEP INC-3  
FROM: Sarah Martik, Executive Director  

RE: Emissions, Polymers and Precursors of Concern  
Submitted electronically to unep-incplastic.statements@un.org  

Honorable Chair, Esteemed Delegates,  

I thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Sarah Martik, I am the Executive Director at the Center for Coalfield Justice, an environmental and economic justice organization based in the United States in the commonwealth of Pennsylvania.  

The extraction and production phases of the plastic lifespan create severe human health consequences while failing to deliver on industry's bloated promises of economic prosperity. Emissions and toxic releases from these phases pollute our air, contaminate our water, and degrade our soil - and impacted communities pay that cost.  

In western Pennsylvania, the Shell Polymers Monaca Site, an ethane cracker plant, has been in operation for one year: within weeks, they exceeded their yearly allowance of volatile organic compounds, while also exceeding their limits for carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxide, and hazardous air pollutants. They had a sulfuric acid spill, they required excessive flaring that lasted days, and they had a benzene leak that emitted up to 110 micrograms per cubic meter - when any concentration of benzene exceeding 29 micrograms has been shown to show a

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1 Among the three studies conducted by the University of Pittsburgh, with the Pennsylvania Department of Public Health, “Hydraulic Fracking Epidemiology Research Studies: Childhood Cancer Case Control Study” shows that children living within 1 mile of well infrastructure are 5-7x more likely to develop lymphoma.  

2 “Frackalachia Update” by Sean O’Leary at the Ohio River Valley Institute. Gas-producing counties throughout Appalachia have lost jobs, population, and wealth since the fracking "boom."  
significant hazard to human health\textsuperscript{3}. These types of emissions are coming from a supposedly “state-of-the-art facility” which inspires a dire lack of confidence in industry’s ability to safely operate at all. Per Item 8 in the Zero Draft Text, this instrument must include not only polymers and plastics, but also the monomers, additives, and other precursors that are emitted and released all the time from fossil fuel production.

Despite political efforts to separate or distinguish upstream and downstream impacts, the reality of the plastics production cycle is that these impacts cannot be separated. Oil and gas extraction produces hazardous solid waste – radioactive waste\textsuperscript{4} – that is disposed of in the same landfills as our plastic packaging. There is no way to recycle our way around hazardous waste disposal: this problem will persist so long as plastic is as inextricably linked to extraction as it is now.

I implore all Parties to move forward in good faith with negotiations that advance community-centered solutions and that respect the responsibility given to this body by the UNEA resolution 5/14. We need to give strong authority to the governing body of this instrument with a “start and strengthen” approach so that we might start addressing this timely and critical issue for so many communities straightaway.

Thank you.

\textsuperscript{3} “After repeated air pollution violations, Shell plastics plant hit with federal lawsuit” by Dana Drugmand. https://www.ehn.org/shell-plastics-2660007355.html

\textsuperscript{4} “America’s Radioactive Secret” by Justin Nobel. Investigative journalism put a bright spotlight on radioactive waste produced by the oil and gas industry. https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-features/oil-gas-fracking-radioactive-investigation-937389/