Second session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment (INC-2), UNESCO in Paris, France, from 29 May to 2 June 2023

1. Title of the side event: Socio-economic considerations in the transition to circular approaches to plastic, including human rights approaches and inclusion of the informal waste sector

2. Date: Thursday, 1 June 2023, from 1:30 to 2:50 pm, Hall 4, UNESCO

3. Co-organizers: Yasuhiro Kamakura, Chemicals Industry Specialist, Sectoral Policies Department (SECTOR), International Labour Organization (ILO) [kamakura@ilo.org]

4. Presenters and titles:

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   *Ms. Maria Tsakona, Senior Waste and Marine Litter Expert, GRID-Arendal [maria.tsakona@grida.no]*
   
   *Mr. Ben R. Jordan, International Council of Beverages Associations [benrjordan@coca-cola.com]*
   
   *Mr. Bert De Wel, Global Climate and Environment Policy Coordinator, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) [bert.dewel@ituc-csi.org]*
   
   *Ms. Daria Cibrario, Local and Regional Government Officer, Public Services International (PSI) [daria.cibrario@world-psi.org] and Mr. Gerardo Juara, Secretary for the Environment, AGOEC, Argentina [gerardo.juara@gmail.com]*
5. Number of participants and breakdown of types of participants: Around 170 people. Types of participants are unavailable.

6. Key messages resulting from the event:

In order of presentation:

**ILO:** The transition to sustainability must adopt a human-centred and labour rights-based approach, prioritizing marginalized individuals and fostering inclusive and fair transitions. The ILO’s Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all, ensure decent work, social inclusion, and poverty eradication.
Decent Work Agenda's four pillars are essential for sustainable development and should be central to inclusive and sustainable growth policies. Including the informal waste sector is crucial for achieving a just transition in managing plastic waste. International labour standards provide a robust framework for addressing the challenges of transitioning to sustainable development while leaving no one behind. Collective action and ensuring progress benefits everyone are vital elements of this transition.

**South Africa:** South Africa has implemented legislative commitments, policies, and programmes to integrate waste pickers into the waste management system. This includes guidelines, strategies, and initiatives to improve their working conditions and formalize their employment. The government recognizes their role in recycling and offers compensation through the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme. Additionally, the Recycling Enterprise Support Programme (RESP) supports emerging waste management companies, creating green jobs and empowering disadvantaged communities. South Africa is committed to sustainability, inclusivity, and environmental responsibility.

**Kenya:** Kenya advocates for a just transition in the Legally Binding Treaty on Ending Plastic Pollution to protect the environment and achieve its development goals as outlined in Vision 2030. The country emphasizes the inclusion of vulnerable groups, such as waste pickers, and promotes safe working conditions, capacity building for green jobs, and decent compensation. Just Transition Initiative (JTI) facilitates dialogue and recommendations for a fair transition, focusing on waste pickers and affected communities. The goal is to reduce disparities in the plastic value chain and promote sustainability.

**UN-HABITAT:** World generates more than 2 billion tonnes of municipal solid waste every year, of which 40% is mismanaged. Mismanaged waste is a source of plastic pollution and affects the poor, especially people who informally collect and recover the waste disproportionately. Their contribution to resource circularity and environmental conservation is clear, though they are trapped in poverty. Why is it like this? The reason here is that financing in waste management and circular economy is utterly not enough to support necessary infrastructure investments and creation of decent jobs for those in informal waste sector. In low-to-middle income countries source of finance for reverse logistics is from government only. EPR system is an absolute key for injecting finances from consumers and producers to build just and environmentally sound reverse logistics for plastics. Right question to ask here is what elements to be included in the EPR system to facilitate such change and what plastic treaty can do about it. I would like to ask this question to everyone here, and end my presentation, for us to think about this systematic challenge related to circular economy.

**GRID-Arendal:** A geographically tailored capacity-building programme is necessary to facilitate a Just Transition of the Informal Recycling Sector. This programme recognizes the important role of workers in informal and cooperative settings involved in the plastic collection, sorting, and recycling. By implementing a just transition, sustainable economies, decent work, social inclusion, and poverty eradication should be supported. To fulfil the possible obligations under the agreement, developing countries require financial, technological, and capacity-building assistance. The capacity-building programme aims to increase awareness, provide education, and empower affected communities, workers, producers, and consumers. It addresses training needs identified by organizations such as WIEGO and the Global Alliance of waste pickers, focusing on skills development (business-financial skills, understanding the value chain, global market of recyclables, quality collection and shorting, pre-processing of recyclables, EPR, etc), work conduct (mental and physical health, safety at work, PPE, equality, etc), internal and external interactions (training on
organizing the informal recycling sector, operating cooperatives, etc.), and governance aspects (legal recognition of the informal recycling sector). Stakeholder engagement is crucial, involving educators, trainers, technical experts, local government, and the informal recycling sector. It is recommended to use a “training the trainers” approach, utilizing local experts and organizations. The programme should be customized to the needs of the Informal Recycling Sector at the different geographical areas, considering cultural, socio-economic and other local characteristics. Ensuring that the benefits of the training will continue after the actual training is crucial for both the sustainability of the programme and for the livelihoods of those trained.

Business Coalition for a Global Plastics Treaty: The Coalition comprises businesses, financial institutions, NGOs, and business organizations committed to an effective and legally binding treaty addressing plastic pollution and promoting a circular economy. Their policy recommendations include supporting the informal waste sector, promoting a just transition, integrating informal waste workers, and requiring businesses to report on their engagement. Their objective is to protect the environment and human health, emphasizing lifecycle approaches, climate and biodiversity efforts, and the polluter pays principle. Priority policy areas include reduction, product design, recycling, EPR, waste management, microplastics, and monitoring. The Coalition recently joined the Fair Circularity Initiative, emphasizing human rights, engagement, and inclusion of informal waste workers in policy-making.

International Trade Unions Confederation (ITUC): The ITUC raises concerns about the organization of side events and selection processes at INC-2 and emphasizes the need for clear procedures and balanced engagement. They advocate for a just transition in the plastic policy debate, involving workers and trade unions to ensure the well-being of both workers and the environment. Integrating just transition obligations in the binding plastic treaty would lead to more ambitious policies and support from civil society. The ILO provides tools for social justice implementation, including promoting labour rights and a safe working environment. The treaty should reference the ILO’s Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (adopted in 1998 and amended in 2022), and incorporate social dialogue principles with stakeholders.

Public Services International (PSI): Public service workers play a significant role in tackling the global plastic pollution crisis throughout its life cycle. They are involved in waste management, clinical waste disposal, water and sanitation services, public space maintenance, emergency response, environmental regulation, and government administration. The contribution of public service workers extends beyond their job roles, with workers actively engaged in advocating for recognition and better working conditions. PSI emphasizes the importance of including public service workers and their unions in all stages of the plastic value chain and discussions. Their expertise should inform sustainable and just solutions, upholding human and labour rights. Adequate public investment and active labour market policies are crucial for effective waste management and decent employment opportunities in the public sector.

7. Key policy considerations for the INC process resulting from the event, including the INC-2 discussions, and outstanding gaps to address in moving forward towards an international legally binding instrument:

In order of presentation:

South Africa: A new global plastic instrument must prioritize just transitions and establish clear strategic pillars. South Africa’s National Waste Management Strategy (NWMS) consists
of three pillars: waste minimization, effective and efficient waste services, and compliance, enforcement, and awareness. In this context, EPR schemes play a crucial role in implementing this new instrument.

In 2020, South Africa published the EPR Regulations alongside Section 18 Notices. These regulations became operational in 2022, targeting sectors such as electrical, electronic, lighting, paper, packaging, and certain single-use products. The EPR regulatory framework acknowledges the important role of waste pickers in collecting recyclables and aims to integrate them into the waste management system.

The National Regulations have officially identified and recognized waste pickers within the EPR scheme. It emphasizes the significance of Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMME) development and waste pickers' involvement for the success of the EPR Scheme. There is a pressing need for increased recycling efforts and greater participation of waste pickers.

Under the EPR regulations, the Producer Responsibility Organization is obligated to compensate waste collectors, reclaimers, or pickers who register with the National Registration Database. These compensations are for their collection services and the environmental benefits they contribute. The collection service fee has been payable since November 2022.

**Kenya:** Kenya's priorities for inclusion in a new plastic instrument are as follows:

1. Ensuring respect for the human rights of informal actors, particularly in terms of health and safety, by promoting safe working conditions.
2. Recognizing and integrating informal actors, such as waste pickers who are currently involved in the plastic life cycle, into the proposed treaty.
3. Investing in and building the capacity of informal players to facilitate the transition of the sector toward clean, green, and decent jobs.
4. Ensuring fair compensation for informal players through the proposed EPR schemes.
5. Reducing disparities in opportunities and benefits among different players within the plastics value chain.

**Business Coalition for a Global Plastics Treaty:** A new global plastic instrument should adhere to three fundamental principles.

1. It should prioritize the reduction of plastic production and usage by adopting a circular economy approach, recognizing that recycling alone is insufficient. Emphasis should be placed on eliminating problematic plastic applications and reducing the demand for short-lived products. To achieve this, it is essential to establish binding criteria and timelines for phasing down or phasing out the use of problematic plastics and additives. Furthermore, the instrument should prohibit or restrict the use of chemicals and pollutants that are harmful to human health and the environment.
2. For plastic items that cannot be eliminated, it is crucial to implement globally harmonized standards and mandatory design requirements that facilitate recycling. Targets should be set to promote the development of systems and infrastructure that keep plastics in circulation for longer periods and minimize environmental leakage. Additionally, the implementation of EPR policies is essential, wherein industry players bear the responsibility of financing the collection and treatment of packaging and short-lived products. Furthermore, it is imperative to protect the rights of informal waste workers and ensure their well-being.
3. Preventing and mitigating plastic leakage into the environment is of utmost importance. Strong waste management practices, coupled with regulatory and
financial incentives, are necessary to foster the adoption of circular economy solutions at the local level. The issue of existing plastic pollution should not be overlooked, and measures must be taken to address both micro and macro plastics that are currently polluting the environment.

**UN-HABITAT:** UN-HABITAT calls for a fair, inclusive, and equitable just transition of the Informal Waste and Recovery Sector (IWRS), ensuring the generation and preservation of decent work opportunities without leaving anyone behind. This entails allowing IWRS workers to pursue their livelihoods in a dignified manner, whether within or outside the sector, and involving all stakeholders affected by the transition in the development and implementation process. Essential components of a just transition for the IWRS include official recognition and legislative support, protection of human and labour rights, access to social services and healthcare programs, and fair remuneration for all IWRS stakeholders. These crucial considerations should be brought to the forefront during the initial meeting of the INC, while also serving as fundamental elements for promoting a just transition in local and national policies that strive to formalize and integrate informal waste and recovery workers as part of strategies aimed at addressing plastic pollution.

**GRID-Arendal:** A new global plastic instrument must include reference to a global capacity-building programme that encompasses the training needs already identified by organizations such as WIEGO, the Global Alliance of waste pickers, and other national associations of waste pickers. This program should address various elements, including:

1. Skills development and raising awareness: Empowering waste pickers in business and financial skills, understanding the value chain, global market trends for recyclables, quality collection and sorting techniques, pre-processing of recyclables, and EPR practices.
2. Work conduct: Focusing on mental and physical health, workplace safety, provision of personal protective equipment (PPE), and promoting equality among waste pickers.
3. Internal interactions/structures: Providing training on organizing the informal recycling sector, fostering cooperation through operating cooperatives, and enhancing collaboration among waste pickers.
4. External interactions/structures: Educating waste pickers on governance mechanisms, municipal procurement procedures, and regulations pertaining to their rights.

This comprehensive programme will ensure that all training needs are met, enabling waste pickers to enhance their skills, improve their working conditions, and engage more effectively with external stakeholders.

**ITUC:** In a new global plastic instrument, just transition must go beyond the rhetoric of politicians who often proclaim that "no one should be left behind." It involves actively involving workers and their unions as key stakeholders in all aspects of the plastic policy debate. By implementing appropriate just transition policies, we can prevent a situation where workers are pitted against environmental protection. The treaty must fully respect the ILO’s Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (adopted in 1998 and amended in 2022). Taking care of both workers and the environment should be pursued hand in hand. Including just transition obligations in the binding plastic treaty is essential for several reasons. Firstly, it will result in the implementation of more effective and ambitious policies. Secondly, ensuring justice for all workers and communities involved will garner support from civil society.
PSI: PSI calls for the following elements for a new global plastic instrument:

1. Fully include public service workers and their unions at all stages of the plastic value chain and in discussions.
2. Capitalize on their frontline service expertise to design and deliver sustainable, safe, just, and effective solutions.
3. Uphold and implement human and labour rights of all workers involved, regardless of their employment status.
4. Include “just transition” as a principle in the instrument, according to the ILO definition.
5. Set up a social dialogue table between governments and trade union organizations to provide input throughout the INC process.
6. Ensure adequate levels of public investment are allocated to fund waste management systems, including both physical infrastructure and a sufficient number of professionally trained staff in decent employment conditions.
7. Promote active labour market policies and create decent employment opportunities in public services within local communities to effectively address the global plastic pollution crisis.

8. What are the key knowledge products and resource tools that are currently available to inform negotiators in this process (this is not intended as a bibliography, please provide a maximum 3-5 resources)? Please also comment on any data and knowledge gaps (if any).

**In order of presentation:**

**ILO:**

- Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all
- International Labour Standards, particularly the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155) and the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187)
- Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (adopted in 1998 and amended in 2022)
  (See: UNEP/PP/INC.2/INF/10: Information submitted by the Secretariat of the International Labour Organization (ILO))

**South Africa:**

- Constitution (1996) Section 24 Everyone has a right to an environment that is not harmful to health and well-being and the right for the environment to be protected for the benefit of current and future generations
- National Waste Management Strategy (NWMS)
- Waste Pickers Integration Guideline for South Africa

**Kenya:**

- Sustainable Waste Management Act 2022
- Just Transition Initiative (JTI)

**UN-HABITAT:**
- A report: Leaving no one behind - How a global instrument to end plastic pollution can enable a just transition for the people informally collecting and recovering waste

GRID-Arendal:
- A report: “Just Transition of Women in the Waste Management Sector”

Business Coalition for a Global Plastic Treaty:
- Key elements in the international legally-biding instrument to end plastic pollution - Policy Recommendations for consideration at INC-2

ITUC:
- Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (adopted in 1998 and amended in 2022)

PSI:
- To ensure sustainable waste services, we must value waste workers and make sure they are in decent jobs

Summary of the presentations:

In order of presentation:

ILO: The ILO introduces a side event that aims to discuss the socio-economic aspects of a life cycle approach to plastics, with a specific focus on rights issues in the world of work. The side event seeks to identify two main things. Firstly, it aims to determine the key policy considerations for the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) process, which would result from the event, including the discussions in INC-2, and the remaining gaps that needed to be addressed for progressing towards an international legally binding instrument. Secondly, the event aims to highlight the available knowledge products and resource tools that could inform the negotiators involved in this process.

The transition to sustainability is crucial and needs to be approached from a labour rights-based perspective. The ILO’s Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies promote a human-centred approach by advocating for fair transitions. By managing economies and societies in an environmentally sustainable manner, it is possible to ensure decent work, social inclusion, and poverty eradication.

The four pillars of the Decent Work Agenda (employment, social protection, rights at work, and social dialouge) are essential for sustainable development and should be central to policies that foster inclusive and sustainable growth. It is crucial to ensure that enterprises and workers, including those in the informal economy, are not left behind during the transition.

Addressing the informal waste sector, which plays a significant role in managing plastic waste, is a key aspect of achieving a just transition. Workers, trade unions, and stakeholders have important roles to play in tackling plastic pollution through a just transition.

International human rights law and the ILO’s international labour standards provide a strong framework for addressing the challenges associated with the greening of the economy and transitioning towards sustainable development and poverty eradication. These standards
highlight the importance of collective action, vision, and ensuring that progress benefits everyone without leaving anyone behind.

**South Africa:** South Africa has legislative commitments and policies in place to integrate waste pickers into the country’s waste management system. The Constitution of 1996 guarantees the right to a healthy environment, and the National Environment Management: Waste Act of 2008 and the National Waste Management Strategy (NWMS) provide the legal framework for waste management.

The NWMS 2020 focuses on three strategic pillars: waste minimization, effective and efficient waste services, and compliance, enforcement, and awareness. The goal is to divert 45% of waste from landfill within five years through recycling, recovery, and alternative waste treatment, ensuring clean communities with well-managed waste services.

Acknowledging the importance of waste pickers in the recycling economy, South Africa developed Waste Picker Integration Guidelines in 2020. These guidelines aim to improve the working conditions of waste pickers by integrating them into formal waste management and recycling structures.

The City of Tshwane, in partnership with the Capacity Building Programme for Employment Promotion (CBPEP), conducted a study on waste picker integration within the waste management value chain. The objective was to develop an integration strategy, business models, and good practice guidelines to inform waste picker integration in other municipalities.

EPR regulations were published in 2020, recognizing the role of waste pickers in collecting recyclables. The EPR scheme obligates Producer Responsibility Organizations to compensate waste pickers who register with the National Registration Database for their collection services and environmental benefits.

To facilitate waste picker integration and compensation, the South Africa Waste Picker Registration System (SAWPRS) was developed and piloted in 2022. Over 6500 waste pickers have been registered on the system to date.

The Recycling Enterprise Support Programme (RESP) supports start-up and emerging waste management and recycling companies from previously disadvantaged communities. The program, administered by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment, provides financial support in the form of grant payments to create green jobs, empower recycling communities, and divert waste from landfills. As of 2022/23, there have been 56 beneficiaries of the Programme.

**Kenya:** Kenya is strongly advocating for a Just Transition in the Legally Binding Treaty on Ending Plastic Pollution due to its commitment to environmental protection and its development goals outlined in Vision 2030. The country implemented a ban on single-use plastics in 2017 but recognized that plastic pollution is a transboundary issue requiring international cooperation.

Kenya's emphasis on a Just Transition is driven by the need to safeguard the most vulnerable members of society and prioritize their inclusion in the formal financial and private sectors. The Sustainable Waste Management Act 2022 requires all waste service providers to be registered, and informal waste players are encouraged to register with their respective counties, establish associations or cooperatives, and be linked with material recovery facilities.
Kenya’s outlook on a Just Transition includes respecting the human rights of informal actors, such as waste pickers, ensuring safe working conditions, recognizing and integrating them into the proposed treaty, and investing in their capacity building for clean, green, and decent jobs. The country also emphasizes decent compensation for informal players through EPR schemes and reducing disparities in opportunities and benefits within the plastic value chain.

To advance the Just Transition agenda, Kenya launched the Just Transition Initiative (JTI) in collaboration with South Africa and the International Alliance of Waste Pickers. The initiative aims to create a platform for dialogue and recommendations on a Just Transition, specifically focusing on informal waste pickers, small and micro enterprises, and affected communities. Inter-sessional work will be conducted under the leadership of South Africa and Kenya to develop clear recommendations for a Just Transition in the Legally Binding Instrument.

UN-HABITAT: UN-HABITAT addresses several key points regarding plastic waste and its management. The Global SDG 11.6.1 estimator is used to measure the percentage of municipal solid waste collected and properly managed in control facilities, indicating that 40 percent of waste generated in cities, amounting to around 1.2 billion metric tonnes, is not being managed effectively. The recycling of plastic waste is particularly challenging due to market volatility and the limited percentage of plastic waste being recycled, estimated at only 12.3 percent in low and middle-income countries.

UN-HABITAT emphasizes the need to eliminate unnecessary, problematic, and non-recyclable plastic production. Dialogue between the waste management sector and the packaging industry is necessary to determine which types of plastic were needed for packaging and which should be eliminated. It is crucial to invest in solid waste management in cities, as 40% of municipal solid waste worldwide was mismanaged. However, the funding for waste management in low and middle-income countries is inadequate, requiring increased financial support.

The informal waste sector plays a significant role in plastic recycling, with an estimated 15 million people globally involved, recovering up to 60% of recycled waste. However, these individuals often face poverty and lacked access to essential benefits. Establishing a full plastic circularity involves ensuring circular design for plastic products and facilitating a just transition for the informal waste and recycling sector.

It is essential to develop proper indicators and monitoring mechanisms to enforce policies effectively and integrate the informal sector. Additionally, support for LDCs is crucial. The key considerations include eliminating non-recyclable plastics, increasing investment in waste management, and establishing circularity while addressing the social impacts of plastic recycling, particularly on vulnerable groups. UN-HABITAT concludes its presentation in asking two questions to the participants. First, what can the plastic treaty do to establish this system? Second, what elements should be in EPR system to ensure decent job creation in the plastic value chain?

GRID-Arendal: GRID-Arendal presents a comprehensive geographically tailored capacity-building program to promote a Just Transition of the Informal Recycling Sector. This programme was discussed in the framework of the International Negotiating Committee (INC) and is aligned with UNEP/PP/INC.2/4 document, which addresses the full life cycle of plastics as called for by United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 5/14.

The presentation emphasizes the significant contribution of workers in informal and cooperative settings to plastic collection, sorting, and recycling. A just transition towards an environmentally sustainable economy can support decent work, social inclusion, and poverty
eradication. The means of implementation, including financial, technological, and capacity-building support, are necessary to help developing countries meet their obligations under the agreement.

The capacity-building programme aims to raise awareness, provide education, and empower affected communities, workers, producers, and consumers. It considers training needs defined by organizations such as WIEGO and the Global Alliance of waste pickers. The program focuses on empowerment and capacity building, including skills development (business-financial skills, understanding the value chain, global market of recyclables, quality collection and sorting, pre-processing of recyclables, EPR, etc), work conduct (mental and physical health, safety at work, PPE, equality, etc), internal and external interactions (training on organizing the informal recycling sector, operating cooperatives etc., understand municipal procurement procedures, etc), and governance aspects (legal recognition of the informal recycling sector).

To ensure the programme’s success, it is important to involve all relevant stakeholders and program partners, including educators, trainers, institutional structures, technical experts, local government, and the informal recycling sector. A “training the trainers” model can be implemented, utilizing local experts and organizations. The programme should be tailored to the specific needs of each geography, taking into account cultural, socio-economic and other local characteristics. Additionally, providing support services such as childcare can encourage the participation of women in the training. Efforts should be made to ensure that the benefits of the training continue beyond the initial programme.

GRID-Arendal is working on forming a new partnership with ISWA Women of Waste Task Force, USAID’s Clean Cities, Blue Ocean Program and Wiego to develop a global capacity-building programme based on existing training experiences and filling existing gaps and according to the high policy recommendations provided in the policy brief: “A seat at the table: The Role of the Informal Recycling Sector in Plastic Pollution Reduction, and Recommended Policy Changes”.

**Business Coalition for a Global Plastics Treaty:** The Business Coalition for a Global Plastics Treaty is a group of businesses, financial institutions, key NGOs, and business organizations that are committed to supporting an effective and legally binding treaty to address plastic pollution and promote a circular economy for plastic. The Coalition aims to reduce plastic production and use through a circular economy approach, prioritize the elimination of problematic plastic applications, establish global standards for safe plastic circulation, and prevent and remediate plastic leakage into the environment.

The Coalition has developed specific policy recommendations, including recognizing and supporting the informal waste sector, promoting a just transition for people involved in the plastics value chain, integrating the informal waste sector into formal value chains, and requiring businesses to report on their engagement with informal waste sector workers.

Their overarching objective is to protect the environment and human health from the negative impacts of plastic pollution. They emphasize the need for comprehensive lifecycle approaches, support for climate and biodiversity efforts, respect for the human right to a clean and sustainable environment, and the application of the polluter pays principle. The coalition has identified priority policy areas such as reduction strategies, product design, recycling systems, EPR, waste management, microplastics, and monitoring and reporting.

There are some elements or options that should be strengthened in a new global plastic instrument. For instance, reuse is mentioned but not a well-developed concept in the options paper, with references mostly under “fostering design for circularity” or “encouraging reuse.”
In particular, options around reuse infrastructure (beyond design measures) should be considered, as it would require a systemic intervention to scale reuse solutions. When it comes to recyclability, it is crucial to go beyond technical recyclability towards recyclability "in practice and at scale." "Action plan programmes" or "set of guidelines" are not enough to drive change at the required scale. We must work towards effective, well-designed, and mandatory EPR policies that will play a key part in the solution to achieve plastic recycling at scale, better manage waste, and reduce plastic pollution.

The Coalition has recently joined the Fair Circularity Initiative, which focuses on respecting rights in circular value chains. They recognize the importance of informal waste sector workers, aim to prevent and address human rights impacts in their involvement, engage all partners in recycling value chains, advocate for rights-respecting practices in the informal waste sector, and promote the inclusion and integration of informal waste sector workers in policy-making processes.

ITUC: The ITUC has raised questions about the organization of side events at INC2 and the selection of organizations for presentations. They emphasize the need for clear procedures and balanced engagement with observers. The ITUC discloses that their affiliates are sponsoring their participation in INC.

The ITUC acknowledges the achievement of waste picker organizations in putting workers and the concept of a just transition on the agenda of the UNEA5.2 mandate. In the context of plastic treaty negotiations, a just transition goes beyond mere rhetoric and involves actively involving workers and their unions in all aspects of the plastic policy debate. It aims to avoid pitting workers against environmental protection by ensuring that the well-being of workers and the environment are considered together.

Including just transition obligations in the binding plastic treaty would lead to more ambitious policies and garner support from civil society by ensuring justice for all workers and communities involved. To integrate just transition measures into plastic pollution prevention policies, the ILO provides a comprehensive toolbox for implementing and ensuring social justice. This includes promoting and protecting fundamental principles and rights at work, rights, such as freedom of association, the elimination of forced and child labour, the elimination of discrimination, and ensuring a safe and healthy working environment.

The core obligation of the treaty should include a reference to the ILO's Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (adopted in 1998 and amended in 2022), and all implementation measures and plans should be developed with respect to the ILO's social dialogue principles, which involve quality dialogue with social partners such as employers, unions, and governments at all relevant levels.

PSI: The contribution of public service workers in tackling the global plastic pollution crisis is significant. These workers are involved in various aspects of plastic waste management and are exposed to its effects throughout its life cycle.

Waste management services play a crucial role in collecting, transporting, sorting, recycling, and properly disposing of plastic waste. They also engage in tasks such as landfill de-pollution and re-naturing to minimize environmental harm. Clinical waste management, including the handling of hazardous and contaminated materials, is another area where public service workers contribute.

Water, sewage, and sanitation services workers are responsible for maintaining pipes, treating wastewater and mud, and removing plastic waste from waterways and sewage systems. Public space maintenance workers, such as street sweepers and janitorial staff,
play a role in keeping roads, buildings, and infrastructure clean from plastic litter. Green space, inland waterway, and coastal space maintenance workers, including park rangers, forest guards, and biologists, work towards recovering contaminated landfills and preserving coastal and marine areas.

Public emergency services, like firefighters and civil protection personnel, deal with plastic-related incidents and emergencies. Public environmental and health agencies employ regulatory inspectors, scientists, and environmental auditors to monitor and enforce regulations. Additionally, national, regional, and local government administrations contribute through urban planning and waste service management.

The involvement of public service workers in addressing plastic pollution extends beyond their job roles. Women street sweepers in Chad, clinical waste disposal workers in India, and municipal waste workers in Tunisia and Ghana are among those actively engaged in the cause. They advocate for recognition as public service workers and demand better working conditions.

To effectively tackle the plastic pollution crisis, key messages put forward by PSI emphasize the need to fully include public service workers and their unions at all stages of the plastic value chain and discussions. Their frontline expertise should be capitalized on to design and implement sustainable, safe, just, and effective solutions. Human and labour rights of all workers involved must be upheld, regardless of employment status. The concept of “just transition” as defined by the ILO should be incorporated, and social dialogue between governments and trade unions should inform the process.

Adequate public investment should be allocated to fund waste management systems, including trained staff in sufficient numbers and decent employment conditions. Active labour market policies should be promoted to generate decent employment opportunities in public services at the local level, enabling an effective response to the global plastic pollution crisis.
Socio-economic and employment considerations of a life cycle approach to plastics, including human and labour rights of all workers in waste services

Objectives

This side event aims to discuss socio-economic aspects of a life cycle approach to plastics focusing on the rights issues in the world of work. The side event will identify: (1) key policy considerations for the INC process resulting from the event, including the INC-2 discussions, and outstanding gaps to address in moving forward towards an international legally binding instrument; and (2) what are the key knowledge products and resource tools that are currently available to inform negotiators in this process?

Context

A just transition to sustainability is necessary and urgent. A human rights-based or a human-centered approach is essential for achieving economic, social, and environmental sustainability through the life cycle of plastics. A human rights-based approach focuses on capacity development, both of duty bearers to meet their obligations and of individuals to claim their rights. Additionally, it emphasizes prioritizing individuals in marginalized or vulnerable situations who face significant barriers to realizing their rights. For example, the ILO Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all serve as a means to implement a human-centred approach by promoting just transitions. Well-managed, environmentally sustainable economies and societies' response to plastic pollution can ensure decent work for all, social inclusion, and the eradication of poverty. The four pillars of the Decent Work Agenda—social dialogue, social protection, rights at work, and employment—are crucial components of sustainable development and should be central to policies aimed at fostering robust, inclusive, and sustainable growth and development. In order to achieve a just transition, it is crucial to ensure that enterprises and workers, including those in the informal economy, are not left behind during the transition. Addressing the informal waste sector, which plays a significant role in managing plastic waste, particularly in developing countries, is a key aspect of the just transition. Workers, trade unions and stakeholders can play vital roles in addressing plastic pollution through a just transition. In this regard, along with the international human rights law, the ILO's international labour standards offer a robust framework for addressing the challenges to the world of work associated with the greening of the economy and, more broadly, with the transition towards sustainable development and poverty eradication. They serve as a testament to the power of collective action, vision and a deep understanding that progress holds true meaning only when no one is left behind.

Agenda

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<td>Yasuhiko Kamakura, Chemicals Industry Specialist, Sectoral Policies Department (SECTOR)</td>
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<td>Time</td>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Name and Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:35-1:40</td>
<td>Government of South Africa</td>
<td>Mamogala Jennifer Musekene, Head of Delegation, Deputy Director-General: Chemicals and Waste Management, Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:40-1:45</td>
<td>Government of Kenya</td>
<td>Michael Thuo Kinyua, 3rd Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora Affairs</td>
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**Perspectives from UN entity/UNEP partner organization**

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<th>Time</th>
<th>Title and Brief</th>
<th>Name and Organization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:45-1:50</td>
<td>Leaving no one behind - just transition of informal waste sector under the plastic treaty: what is possible?</td>
<td>Nao Takeuchi, Human Settlements Officer (Waste Management) United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT)</td>
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<td>1:50-1:55</td>
<td>A comprehensive geographically tailored capacity-building program promoting a Just Transition of the Informal Recycling</td>
<td>Maria Tsakona GRID-Arendal</td>
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**Perspectives from business associations and trade unions**

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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>1:55-2:02</td>
<td>What is the role of the treaty, and of stakeholders, to address socio-economic considerations for the informal sector?</td>
<td>Ben Jordan International Council of Beverages Associations</td>
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<td>2:02-2:09</td>
<td>Workers as actors to tackle plastic pollution with a Just Transition</td>
<td>Bert De Wel, Global Climate and Environment Policy Coordinator International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)</td>
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<td>2:09-2:14</td>
<td>The contribution of public service workers in tackling the global plastic pollution crisis</td>
<td>Daria Cibrario and Gerardo Juara Public Services International (PSI)</td>
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<td>2:14-2:40</td>
<td>Questions and Answers</td>
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<td>2:40-2:45</td>
<td>Wrap up and closing</td>
<td></td>
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