



PLASTIC POLLUTION THE BUSINESS CASE FOR A UN TREATY

October 2020

Summary

- A new report by WWF, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and Boston Consulting Group finds that a new international treaty on plastic pollution would benefit both the environment and businesses and accelerate global efforts.
- As of now, twenty-nine major businesses have signed a business manifesto, calling for the urgent start of negotiations on a new global treaty.
- A large number of governments have already signaled an interest in exploring the option of a new global agreement, and a quarter of the UN membership have explicitly called for such a treaty to be developed.
- WWF, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and Boston Consulting Group are recommending a binding international treaty to address plastic pollution and calls on UN member states to urgently start negotiations.

Background

Plastic pollution is a global, transboundary and cross-sectoral problem. Worldwide, it is estimated that plastic waste causes USD 13 bn of damage to marine ecosystems (UNEP, 2014). The rapid growth in plastic pollution is having significant consequences for the environment, human health, economies and communities. Marine plastic pollution can neither be solved through national or regional initiatives nor through voluntary measures alone. A coordinated international response is needed, one that aligns businesses and governments behind a shared understanding of the causes of plastic pollution, and a clear approach to addressing them.

The business case for a new treaty

A newly released report, authored by WWF, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and Boston Consulting Group, outlines why a global treaty is needed to help stop the 11 million metric tons of plastic flowing into the ocean each year. WWF, BCG and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation are calling for a binding international agreement to address plastic pollution. The report outlines potential elements of such an agreement and the reasons why a global treaty also will be good for business.

Through the development of harmonized standards/definitions, common metrics and methodologies, global and national targets and action plans, and support for innovation and infrastructure development, a UN treaty on plastic pollution will be good for the planet and good for business. An effective treaty would help reduce operational complexity and compliance risk across

markets, enable businesses to plan investments, simplify reporting and progress tracking, and coordinate actions across the plastic value chain. A UN treaty on plastic pollution can help drive the transition to a circular economy for plastic — at speed and scale.

Growing support for a treaty

Several major global companies has already taken the findings of the report to the next step through a business manifesto, available at www.plasticpollutiontreaty.org, which calls on UN member states to commence negotiations on a new global treaty. At the launch of the report, on 14 October 2020, twenty-nine major global companies, including Amcor, Borealis, Danone, H&M, Mars, Nestlé, PepsiCo, Tesco, The Coca-Cola Company, Unilever and Woolworths, had endorsed the manifesto. The business manifesto will remain open to new signatories, and the list of endorsing companies is expected to grow over the coming months.

The business manifesto comes alongside almost 2 million people also calling for a treaty, and more than two-thirds of UN member states, [from across the world](#), have officially declared that they are open to considering the option of a new global agreement, including [African](#), [Baltic](#), [Caribbean](#), [Nordic](#) and [Pacific](#) states, as well as the [European Union](#). A quarter of the UN membership have already explicitly called for such a treaty to be developed.

Towards a global treaty

A resolution containing a mandate to start negotiations on a treaty is expected to be tabled at the next session of the UN Environment Assembly, which, before the outbreak of COVID-19, was scheduled to be held in Nairobi in February 2021. It is currently unclear when substantive decisions on the way forward can be made under the auspices of UNEA. Now is therefore the time for governments to pledge their commitment to develop a new treaty on plastic pollution.

There will be several opportunities over the coming months for governments to express their support for the development of a new global treaty on plastic pollution, such as the upcoming meeting of the UN expert group on marine litter and microplastics on November 9th to 13th, the Our Ocean Conference in December, and future events organized by the Group of Friends to combat marine litter in New York, in addition to regional forums.

Governments call to action

WWF is calling on more governments to:

- **Join the call for a new treaty and publicly express support, at the highest possible level, for a new global agreement on plastic pollution.**
- **Begin substantive discussions on the possible elements, scope and parameters of a new treaty.**

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