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Kenyan Civil Society Coalition Calls for Strong African Unity and Ambitious Plastics Treaty Ahead of INC-5.2

Nairobi, July 31st, 2025 - In the lead-up to the fifth resumed session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-5.2) on the Global Plastics Treaty, the Kenyan Civil Society Coalition to End Plastic Pollution is calling on African governments to boldly demand and push for an ambitious, legally binding treaty. The treaty must be fit for purpose; protecting human health and the environment from plastic pollution across its lifecycle.

This commitment was announced during a media breakfast in Nairobi, organised by the Centre for Environmental Justice and Development (CEJAD), in partnership with Heinrich Boll Foundation (HBF)

“This is an opportunity for Africa to assert its position, protect its people, and shape an ambitious, legally binding treaty that delivers real, systemic change. Let this treaty reflect the lived realities of our people, not the boardroom interests of petrochemical companies as witnessed over the past negotiations,” said **Griffins Ochieng**, Executive Director of CEJAD.

INC-5.2 negotiations, scheduled to take place in Geneva from August 5th to 14th, marks a critical juncture in the global effort to end plastic pollution. The goal of the negotiations this time round is to finalise the treaty, addressing various aspects of plastic pollution across its lifecycle, including production, chemicals of concern, design, trade, waste management, and a just transition.

Governments, including Kenya, have taken commendable steps to address plastic pollution. However, while waste separation and recycling efforts are important, they remain insufficient as long as plastic production continues to rise unchecked. Recycling is not a silver bullet; it often

shifts the problem rather than solving it. We need comprehensive solutions and sustainable alternatives that address the plastic lifecycle from production to disposal.

“Kenya’s single-use plastic ban showed that policy works, but real progress requires going beyond recycling to tackle the root cause: overproduction. A binding global treaty must shift us from managing plastic waste to ending plastic waste.” **Fredrick Njau**, Programme Coordinator, Sustainable Development Programme, HBF

African nations as primary importers of plastic products suffer the most from toxic air pollution, polluted waterways, destroyed ecosystems, and overwhelmed waste systems. Scientific evidence, including a recent report by CEJAD [*Dangerous Fun*](#), reveals the presence and prevalence of hazardous chemicals in plastic products linked to **cancer, respiratory illnesses, reproductive disorders, and other serious non-communicable diseases**.

“African nations must realise what is at stake for them in these negotiations. Africa must not become the dumping ground for the Global North’s plastic waste or be forced to adopt polluting technologies like incineration and waste-to-energy schemes under the guise of “solutions.” **Hellen Dena**, Pan-African Plastic Project Lead, Greenpeace Africa.

Plastic pollution is not just an environmental issue; it is a public health crisis that poisons our bodies, threatens our livelihoods, and deepens social and economic inequalities. The adoption of the Plastic Treaty will ensure that we safeguard our health and environment.

“At the grassroots , we witness firsthand how plastic pollution compounds existing gender inequalities, especially for women and girls in rural and Indigenous communities. From unsafe menstrual hygiene products to toxic waste infiltrating food and water systems, plastics pose a real threat to bodily autonomy, health, and livelihoods. Solutions must be rooted in justice. We need a treaty that prioritises women-led innovation, Indigenous knowledge, and grassroots action, not one dictated by the profit motives of polluting industries.” Shalon Muiruri, Executive Director of Safe Dada Kenya.

As frontline workers in the waste crisis, waste pickers are demanding a Just Transition that centers their rights, roles, and realities. *“We don’t want to be included as an afterthought. We want policies that start with us; with our knowledge, labor and struggles in mind. A Just Transition means shifting power, from boardrooms to the communities on the ground. It means building a future where waste pickers are protected, respected, and paid fairly for the essential work we do.”* Gisore Nyabuti, Chairperson, Kenya National Waste Pickers Welfare Association.

The Civil Society Coalition in Kenya urge African governments to boldly demand:

1. **A treaty that enshrines legally binding global rules**, not a patchwork of voluntary national actions that let major polluters off the hook.

2. **A reduction in the production of primary plastic polymers**, especially virgin plastics, at the source. We cannot recycle our way out of this crisis.
3. **The elimination of toxic chemicals in plastics**, including harmful additives and polymers. Equally important is **transparency**: knowing what chemicals are contained in plastics enables governments and communities to make informed choices about their use, regulation, and disposal.
4. **A just transition for waste pickers and other informal workers**, including fair wages, recognition, and social protections.
5. **Robust financing mechanisms**, rooted in the *Polluter Pays Principle*, to ensure that those responsible for the crisis are the ones who fund the solutions. The Global Environment Facility and Green Climate Fund alone are insufficient.
6. **Multilateralism that works**; through fair and inclusive decision-making processes. We support majority voting where consensus cannot be reached, so progress isn't derailed by those seeking to delay or weaken the treaty.
7. **The development and scaling up of safe, toxic-free, and accessible reuse and refill systems**, backed by global product design standards, binding reuse targets, investments in infrastructure, and a commitment to the zero-waste hierarchy.
8. **A treaty that upholds human rights now and for future generations**. One that protects our people's health, livelihoods, and dignity.
9. **An end to waste colonialism**, where under-resourced communities are forced to carry the burden of plastic pollution and waste they did not generate.
10. And finally, **strong conflict-of-interest safeguards** to protect the treaty-making process from the undue influence of the plastics, fossil fuel, and petrochemical industries.

This treaty should not be shaped by corporate interests or fossil fuel agendas, but by the frontline communities who have long demanded change.

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About the CSO Coalition to End Plastic Pollution:

The CSO Coalition to End Plastic Pollution is a diverse alliance of civil society organizations in Kenya working collectively to end plastic pollution. The coalition brings together researchers, environmental advocates, legal experts, grassroots movements, community leaders, and waste picker networks to push

for systemic change across the entire plastics lifecycle, from production to disposal with the shared goal of building a future that is plastic-free, people-led, and policy-backed.

The coalition champions policies that protect human health and the environment from the harms of plastic pollution, protects human rights, holds corporations and governments accountable, and amplifies the voices of frontline communities disproportionately affected by plastic pollution. Through coordinated advocacy, public education, and engagement in global negotiations, the coalition envisions a just, inclusive, and plastic-free future for Kenya and beyond.

About CEJAD

<https://www.cejadkenya.org>

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