

UN Plastics Treaty



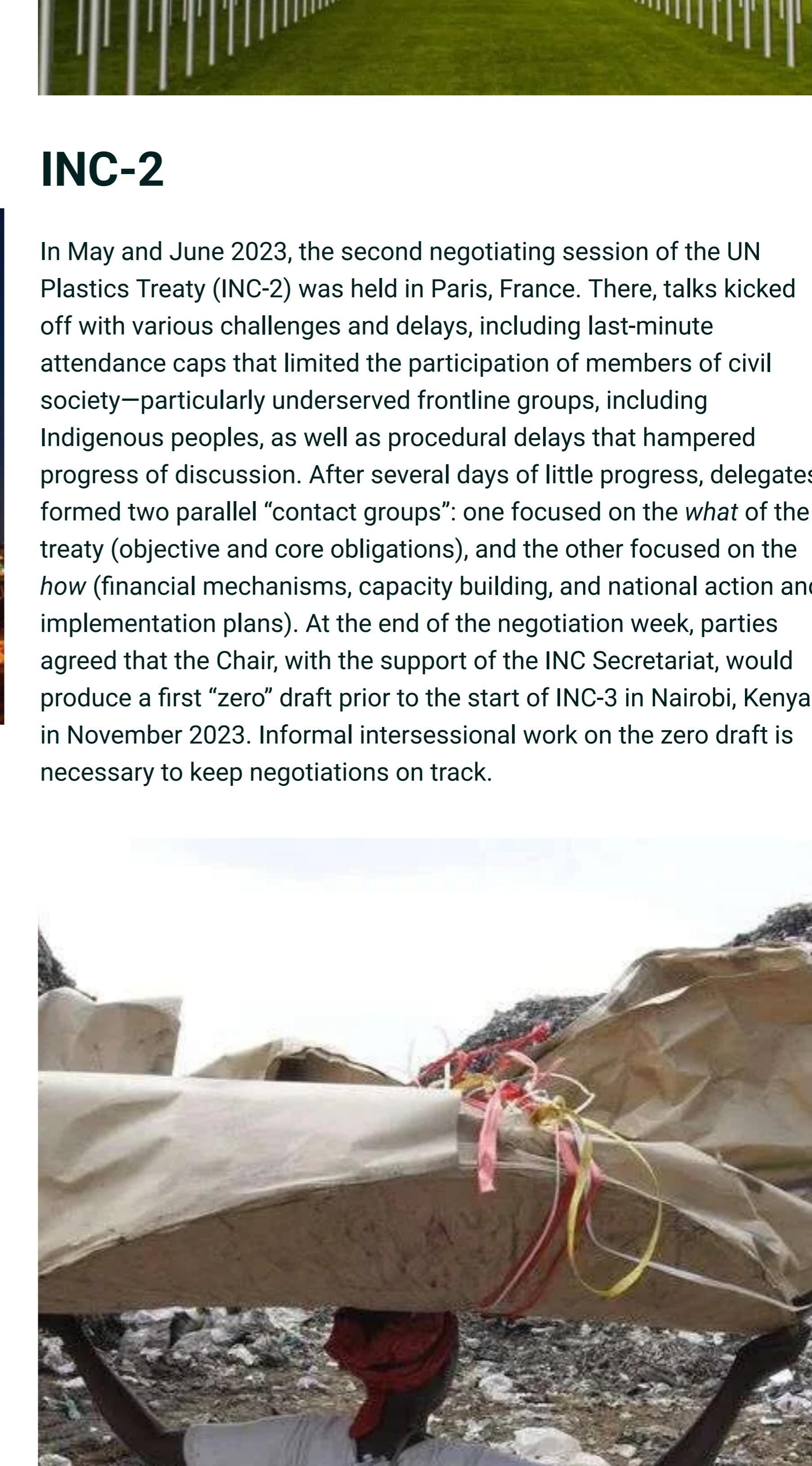
Giant Plastic Tap by Benjamin Von Wong (UNEA)

INC-1

In December 2022, the first negotiating session of the UN Plastics Treaty (INC-1) convened in Punta Del Este, Uruguay, where delegates discussed procedures and foci to set the stage for forthcoming negotiations. There, it became apparent that despite widespread agreement that a UN Plastics Treaty is urgently needed, there is disagreement over what that should look like. Major oil-and-gas-producing nations like the U.S., Saudi Arabia, and some Asian countries proposed the creation of country-specific National Action Plans to set their own non-binding targets. On the other end of the spectrum, a "high-ambition coalition" of countries led by Norway and Rwanda called for a reduction in plastic production as well as a phase-out of certain plastic products and toxic chemical additives. Other UN member states, including many countries in Africa, as well as Costa Rica, Ecuador, Peru, and Switzerland are calling for a more global approach to addressing the plastic pollution crisis.

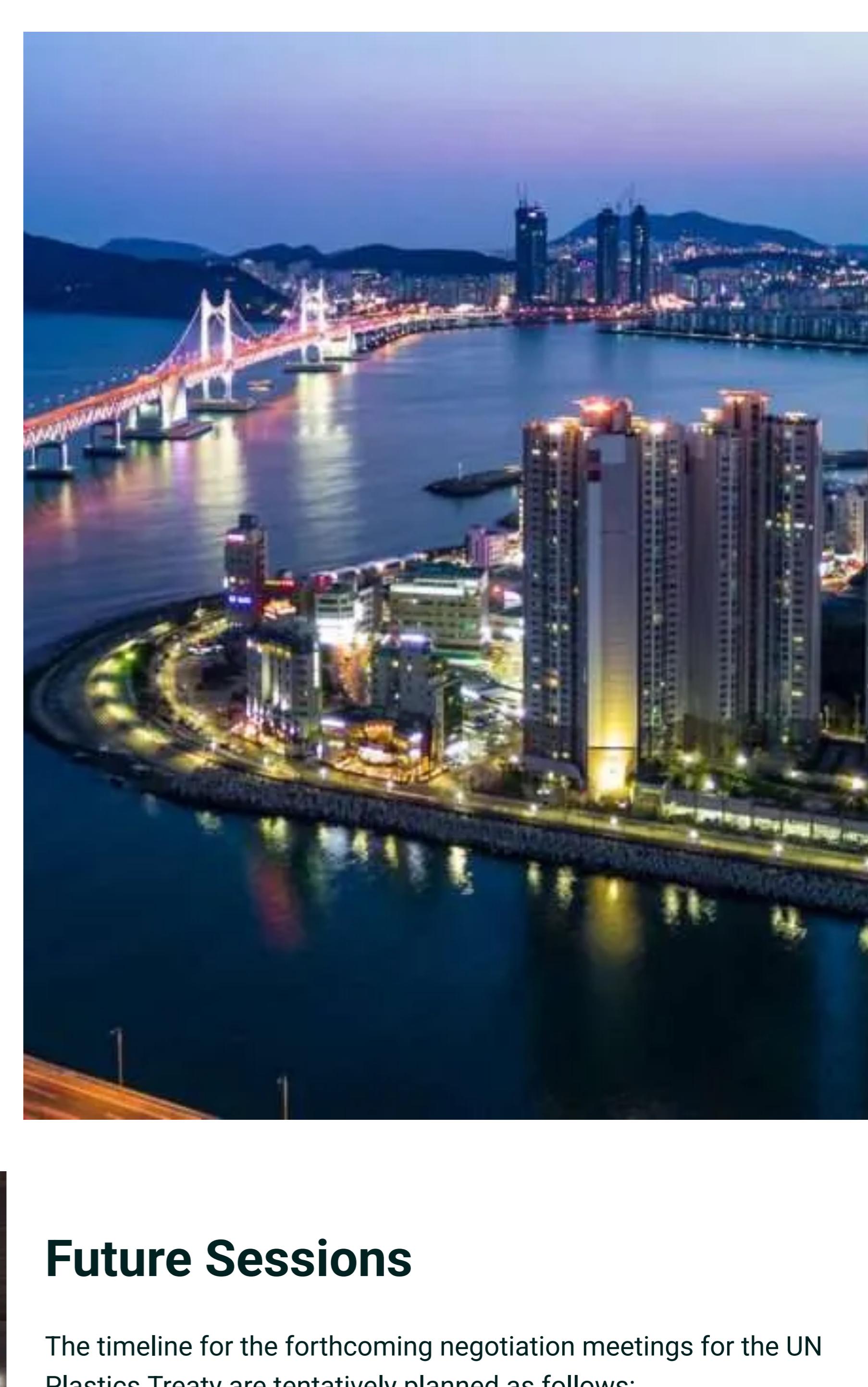
A Mandate for a UN Plastics Treaty

At the conclusion of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5.2) in March 2022, heads of State, environment ministers, and other representatives from 175 nations agreed on a [mandate to create a first-of-its-kind international legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution](#). Central to this agreement is the establishment of an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) tasked with producing a legally binding instrument—a UN Plastics Treaty—addressing "the full life cycle of plastics," which has yet to be defined for the purposes of the Treaty, but which could be considered to span from extraction to disposal, by the end of 2024. [More than 1,000 civil society groups, hundreds of scientists, millions of individuals, and numerous government representatives had called on the UN to commit to negotiating such a treaty ahead of and during UNEA-5.2.](#)



INC-2

In May and June 2023, the second negotiating session of the UN Plastics Treaty (INC-2) was held in Paris, France. There, talks kicked off with various challenges and delays, including last-minute attendance caps that limited the participation of members of civil society—particularly underserved frontline groups, including Indigenous peoples, as well as procedural delays that hampered progress of discussion. After several days of little progress, delegates formed two parallel "contact groups": one focused on the *what* of the treaty (objective and core obligations), and the other focused on the *how* (financial mechanisms, capacity building, and national action and implementation plans). At the end of the negotiation week, parties agreed that the Chair, with the support of the INC Secretariat, would produce a first "zero" draft prior to the start of INC-3 in Nairobi, Kenya in November 2023. Informal intersessional work on the zero draft is necessary to keep negotiations on track.



INC-3

In November 2023, the third negotiating session of the UN Plastics Treaty (INC-3) was held in Nairobi, Kenya—approximately 5 miles, as the crow flies, from the [Dandora dump site](#), a massive heap of plastic and other wastes, some imported from other nations as part of the globalized, industrial waste trade. INC-3 concluded with some encouraging new developments, including substantive discussions and a greater recognition for participation by Indigenous and other non-Civil society groups (hereafter referred to as "third-sector" groups). Negotiators also faced obstacles that continue to threaten the integrity of the agreement: Experts emphasized that plastic, petrochemical, and fossil fuel industry presence and influences on the negotiations and during INC-3 are a primary concern. Some countries proposed a national rather than global approach for binding treaty provisions, though binding rules are needed to significantly reduce plastic production. And while delegates dug into reading, substantially discussing, and developing the treaty's initial starting document—the [Zero Draft](#)—during INC-3, UN Member states failed to reach an agreement on intersessional work to revise the draft ahead of INC-4.

In April 2024, the fourth negotiating session of the UN Plastics Treaty (INC-4) was held in Ottawa, Canada. During INC-4, there was increased acknowledgment of the harmful effects of plastics on human and planetary health. There was increased presence of [fossil fuel, plastic, and petrochemical industry representatives](#) at INC-4 despite attendee calls for conflict of interest policies, while Indigenous and frontline groups were [denied full and equitable participation](#) in the session. Still, a handful of nations took an ambitious approach to limit plastic production at the source and eliminate the use of toxic chemicals throughout the full life cycle of plastics.

While it was agreed to conduct intersessional work before INC-5, countries compromised to exclude upstream measures, which will make it challenging to include key extraction or production reduction measures in the draft plastics treaty. This compromise is a missed opportunity to comprehensively address the root causes of plastic pollution: fossil fuel and plastic production. INC-5, set to take place in Busan, Republic of Korea, beginning in late November 2024, is the final planned session and will be a critical moment to deliver a strong global plastic treaty.



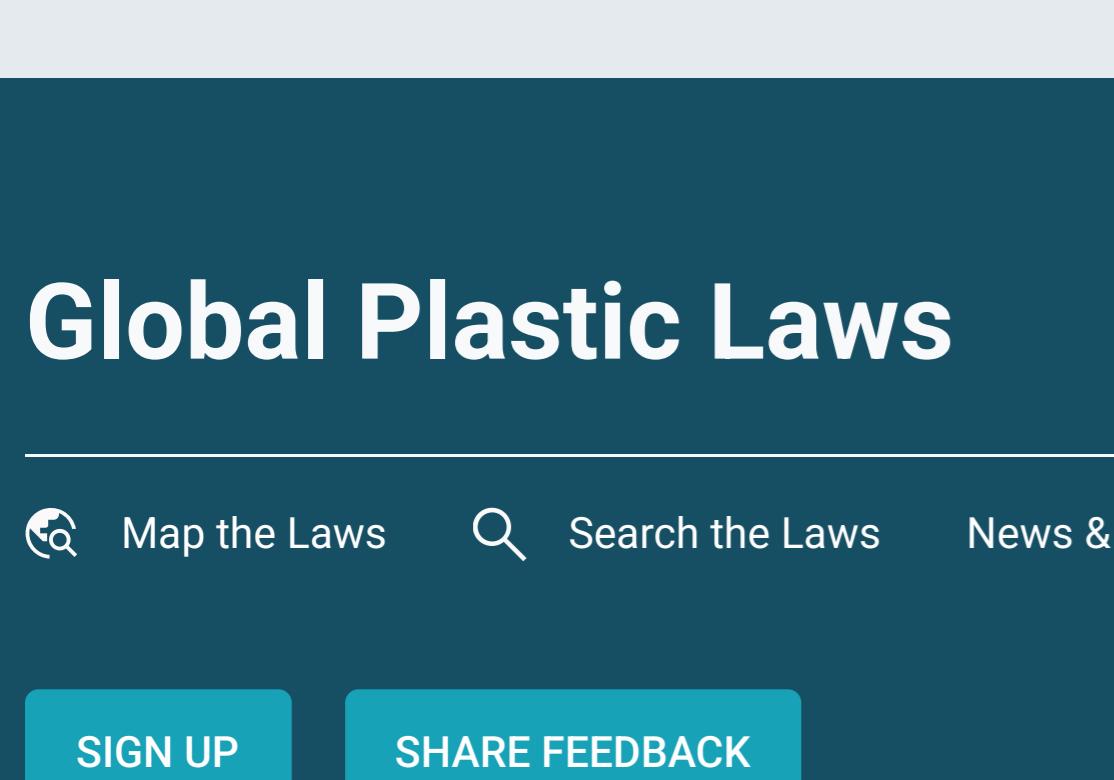
Future Sessions

The timeline for the forthcoming negotiation meetings for the UN Plastics Treaty are tentatively planned as follows:

- [INC 5.2](#), August 5 – August 14th in Geneva, Switzerland

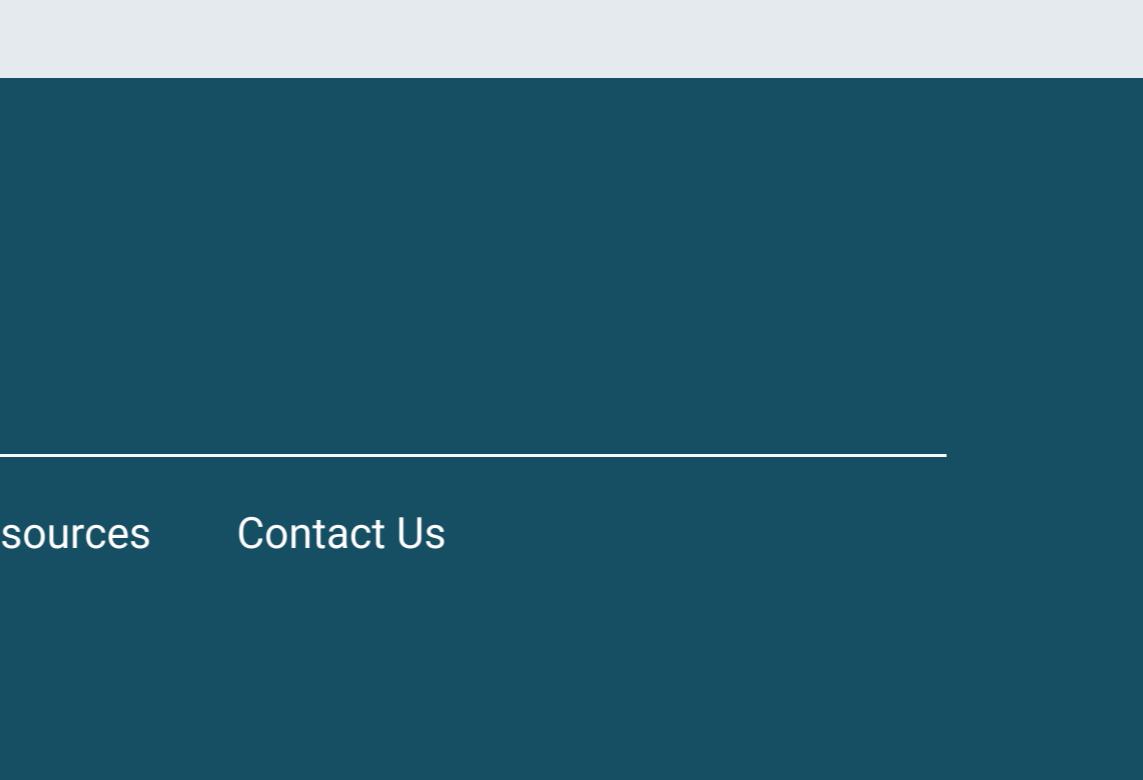
Learn more about the [current draft treaty text](#) and the [key articles to watch here](#). This page will be updated as the UN Plastics Treaty is negotiated.

Recent Articles



Towards a UN Plastics Treaty: Barriers and a Path Forward After INC 5.2 →

As the process for a UN Plastics Treaty continue, after a tumultuous INC 5.2, countries must now address the significant barriers to progress by minimizing conflicts of matters.



Insights Paper: Effective National Planning to Coordinate Action on Plastic Pollution ↗

The National Planning Working Group for Plastics Action recommends and identifies national plastics policy plans for greatest potential impact to reduce plastic pollution.



UN Plastics Treaty: What to Watch for at INC-5.2 →

Negotiations for a UN Plastics Treaty resume in Switzerland August 6-14, 2025. The draft text outlines key divergences in country positions. Decisions on these key articles will determine if the treaty can effectively address plastic pollution.