

PLASTICS AT UNEA3

The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and several global environmental agreements have taken an interest in plastic pollution, recognising it as a serious and rapidly growing issue of global concern that needs an urgent global response. Norway has submitted a draft [resolution to UNEA3](#) calling for the establishment of an Open-Ended Ad Hoc Working Group to make recommendations to strengthen international governance structures for combating marine plastic litter and microplastics that could lead to the proposition of global convention.

Several member representatives of the [#BreakFreeFromPlastic](#) movement are attending UNEA3 in support of a joint call for [an international legally binding agreement on plastics and plastic pollution](#). Any such convention should include certain features: a binding global reduction target, caps on production and consumption of plastics, and requirements for loss prevention, collection, and recycling of all plastics. Global quality standards and market restrictions should accompany a set of strong enforcement mechanisms to ensure governments and industries comply with global targets for reduction.

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4 - 6 DEC: 3RD UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY



6 Dec issue of the Daily Mail (UK)

Joint Statement on Resolution: In Praise of Pollution Prevention, Open-Ended Expert Group

Efforts to address global plastic pollution took a significant step forward today as world governments agreed to establish a specialist group tasked with examining options to combat marine plastic pollution. In a resolution adopted UNEA3, Member States supported a series of actions to eliminate the discharge of plastic litter and microplastics into the oceans, including through preventing plastic waste,

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increasing reuse and recycling and avoiding the unnecessary use of plastic, highlighting the role of extended producer responsibility.

In a significant development, the resolution establishes a process for ongoing coordinated international action, with the newly established Ad Hoc Open-Ended Expert Group tasked with examining options for combating marine plastic litter and microplastics from all sources, including through global legally binding mechanisms.

Up to 12 million tonnes of plastic leak into the oceans each year, harming more than 800 marine species. Unless action is taken, plastic could outweigh fish in the oceans by 2050. The growth in plastic production is also impacting terrestrial and freshwater environments and contributing to climate change, accounting for an estimated 20 percent of global oil consumption by 2050. The Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL), and partner NGOs welcomed the adoption of the resolution, urging countries to accelerate international efforts to address this critical threat to human health and the environment.

EIA Oceans Campaigner Sarah Baulch said: "Our marine wildlife is choking on an ever-growing tidal wave of plastics manufactured to be used once and almost instantly discarded, leaving a polluted legacy for our environment and future generations. We need global leadership and urgent action by all stakeholders to halt the damage that plastic pollution is doing to our oceans."

David Azoulay, Senior Attorney at CIEL said: "Today, countries took an important step that could be the tipping point in the battle against plastic pollution. The open-ended expert group now has the responsibility to deliver an action plan that addresses the urgency of the plastics crisis. To be effective, that plan must address plastic pollution throughout its entire life cycle, from extraction at the shale gas wellhead, to manufacture that impacts fence-line communities, to disposal in our oceans, and to the bodies of consumers and wildlife."



Delphine Lévi Alvarès (Break Free from Plastic) takes a question during a side event

Press on UNEA3 Marine Plastics Resolution

BBC - [UN commits to stop ocean plastic waste](#)

Capital News (Kenya) - [Kenya wins praise for plastics ban at environment summit](#)

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Reuters - [More than 200 nations promise to stop ocean plastic waste](#)

Sky News - [UN members vow to tackle 'ocean Armageddon' plastic problem](#)

And the [World Plastics Council](#) is already putting out language focusing only on the waste management piece of the resolution.

CIEL Report: Plastics Producers Knew There was a Problem as early as 1960s

On 5 Dec, the Center for International Environmental Law (a member of [#BreakFreeFromPlastic](#) and a partner in the production of this newsletter) published the third report in its [Fueling Plastics series](#), investigating what the plastics industry knew and when they knew it regarding the problem of marine and land debris resulting from their products. CIEL's investigation shows that starting in the 1950s, the scientific and research communities and many concerned citizens knew that plastic pollution was becoming a problem, and that it would grow significantly in the coming years.

As early as 1969, the largest players in the plastics and consumer goods industries (Dow, Dupont, Mobil, American Oil Company, Procter & Gamble, and others) were hosting a conference in the US to consider the waste issues resulting from plastic pollution. Participants in this conference clearly showed a common understanding that the push toward disposable plastic bottles - and away from deposit-type bottles - was a result of industry practices in pursuit of profit, *not* of consumer demand, as the industry asserts today.

As we've been reminded several times by presenters during this 3rd UNEA gathering, it was in the following year (1970) that the industry-funded Keep America Beautiful released its most successful ad campaign, the so-called "Crying Indian" TV ad. Through decades of advertisements around the world, the plastics and consumer goods industries have funded programs to both promote recycling and to create the cultural meme that the only pollution problem with plastic is litter - i.e. "misplaced" waste - rather than the existence of the waste itself.

Unfortunately, this idea continues to be a theme in the resolutions adopted here at UNEA, treating plastics and other pollutants as a problem only when they become "waste", rather than identifying them as a problem at the point of design and manufacture.

The tide is beginning to turn on this idea, as resolutions, including the one on marine litter and microplastics, have included language calling for a reduction in the production of pollution such as plastics.



The Women's Major Group and its Partners Honor the [200+ Killed Environment Defenders](#)

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#BreakFreeFromPlastic is a global movement envisioning a future free from plastic pollution. Since its launch in September 2016, over 1,000 non-governmental organisations from across the world have joined the movement to demand massive reductions in single-use plastics and to push for lasting solutions to the plastic pollution crisis. These organisations share the common values of environmental protection and social justice, which guide their work at the community level and represent a global, unified vision. Sign up at www.breakfreefromplastic.org.

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