

Global Plastic Treaty: Environment

The proposed *Global Plastics Treaty* is a UN-led initiative to create a legally binding agreement to curb plastic pollution across its entire lifecycle—from production to disposal—by 2025, with ongoing negotiations addressing bans, waste management, and producer responsibility. It aims to tackle transboundary marine plastic waste and support a circular economy.

Global Plastics Treaty

Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-5.2) is being held 5–14 August 2025 in Geneva, Switzerland. Background, INC-5.1 held in Busan, South Korea (Nov–Dec 2024). The Goal is to Finalise a legally binding international treaty to address plastic pollution across its lifecycle (production to disposal) by 2025.

1. Nature: Legally binding agreement on plastic pollution management.
2. Initiated by: United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) Resolution, 2022.
3. Negotiation Body: Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) under UNEA.
4. Participants: 170+ UN Member States including developed countries, developing nations, Small Island Developing States (SIDS), African Group, GRULAC (Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries).
5. Focus: Comprehensive approach — addresses production, consumption, waste management, and microplastics.

Need for the Treaty

1. Escalating Plastic Production

1. Over 460 million metric tons/year.
2. ~20 million metric tons/year enter the environment.
3. Projected sharp rise by 2040.

2. Ecological Damage

Biodiversity loss, habitat degradation, ecosystem collapse.

3. Human & Economic Costs

Health hazards from microplastics, loss of livelihoods (especially fisheries & tourism).

4. Climate Link

Plastic lifecycle → major greenhouse gas emissions.

5. Unequal Burden

SIDS & vulnerable communities hit hardest despite low contribution to pollution.

6. Policy Gaps

Existing measures like Basel Convention amendments address waste trade, not full lifecycle.

Key Articles and Roadblocks

Article	Focus	Roadblocks
Art. 12 – Capacity Building & Technology Transfer	Financial & technical aid for developing nations; tech transfer, IP waivers	Dispute over binding vs voluntary commitments; control over tech access

Article	Focus	Roadblocks
Art. 13 – Implementation & Compliance	Compliance committee for transparency & equity	Division over punitive vs facilitative approaches; power & structure of committee
Art. 14 – National Plans	Countries to prepare implementation plans linked to global reporting	Disagreement over mandatory vs optional; uniform timelines vs flexibility
Art. 15 – Assessment of Effectiveness	Periodic treaty reviews with scientific indicators	Disputes over benchmarks; delays from disagreements on indicators
Art. 16 – Treaty Effectiveness Evaluation	COP-led evaluations for improvement	Conflict over inclusion of socio-economic & traditional knowledge metrics
Art. 17 – Information Exchange	Data sharing systems for transparency	Disagreement over confidentiality vs public access; sovereignty concerns
Art. 20 – Conference of the Parties (COP)	Main governing body; can form scientific/technical sub-bodies	Dispute over authority scope; consensus vs voting mechanisms

Way Forward

1. Define Clear Obligations

Balance binding commitments with flexibility for developing nations.

2. Balanced Compliance

Combine facilitation & accountability without overly punitive measures.

3. Harmonized National Plans

Ambitious yet flexible timelines respecting national contexts.

4. Standardized Evaluation

Agreed indicators combining scientific, socio-economic, and indigenous knowledge.

5. Empowered COP

Clearly defined mandate; decision-making flexibility (consensus + fallback voting).

UPSC Notes

1. Origin: UNEA-2022 Resolution.
2. INC Role: Negotiates text, addresses political, technical, and legal challenges.
3. Importance: Links environment, climate change, biodiversity, human health.
4. Challenge: Reconciling Global North-South differences on finance, tech transfer, and compliance.

Source: <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/waste/on-the-brink-of-change-why-the-global-plastic-treaty-must-deliver-now>