

# Industry Presence Threatens Plastics Treaty Integrity at INC-5.2

At least 234 fossil fuel and chemical industry lobbyists – a new high compared to the 221 identified by CIEL at INC-5 – have registered to participate in the fifth and final scheduled session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-5.2) of the Plastics Treaty negotiations. The strong presence of lobbyists at this stage of the negotiations raises concerns about corporate influence at a pivotal moment – when negotiators are expected to finalize the treaty text and lay the groundwork for its adoption. The negotiations are intended to provide a treaty truly capable of ending plastic pollution.

The analysis, conducted by the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) – supported by the International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on Plastics (IIPFP), the International Pollutants Elimination Network (IPEN), the Break Free From Plastic movement, the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA), Greenpeace, the Stop Tobacco Pollution Alliance (STPA), the International Alliance of Waste Pickers (IAWP), and Public Services International (PSI) – is based on the United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) provisional list of INC-5.2 participants.

The analysis reveals that:

Fossil fuel and chemical industry lobbyists outnumber the combined diplomatic delegations of all 27 European Union nations and the EU combined (233). Major fossil fuel and chemical companies and their lobbyists are particularly well represented, with Dow and the American Chemistry Council each bringing seven lobbyists, while ExxonMobil has brought six.

Nineteen fossil fuel and chemical lobbyists have secured places in the national delegations of Egypt (6), Kazakhstan (4), China (3), Iran (3), Chile (2), and the Dominican Republic (1).

Chemical and fossil fuel industry lobbyists outnumber the Scientists' Coalition for an Effective Plastic Treaty (60) by nearly four to one, and the International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on Plastics (36) by nearly seven to one.

CIEL's estimate is likely to be conservative, as our methodology relies on delegates to the talks disclosing their own connections to fossil fuel or chemical industry interests, and some lobbyists may choose to obscure that link. The figure does not include lobbyists from adjacent sectors, including fast-moving consumer goods and waste management sectors, all of whom have vested interests in weakening the treaty's ambition.

"We have decades of evidence showing the fossil fuel and chemical industries' playbook: deny, distract, derail. Fossil fuel companies are central to plastic production, as over 99 percent of plastics are derived from chemicals sourced from fossil fuels. Many of these companies are facing legal scrutiny over their role in the climate crisis. After decades of obstruction in the climate negotiations, why would anyone think that they would suddenly show up in good faith in the Plastics Treaty talks? Involving the very corporations that profit from harm in shaping the path forward guarantees one thing: a treaty that protects their bottom line, not the public or the planet," says Ximena Banegas, CIEL Global Plastics and Petrochemicals Campaigner

While the analysis captures the number of participants registered to attend the negotiations, it's only the tip of the iceberg. Industry influence extends well beyond formal participation – through lobbyists embedded within country delegations, informal advisory roles, and lobbying during intersessional periods.

These actors often apply pressure on Member States, engage in intimidation tactics, and attempt to compromise ambition in related processes, threatening the treaty's integrity. In the lead-up to INC-5.2, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) warned that actors with vested interests have used well-documented tactics such as lobbying, strategic funding, and ghostwriting scientific studies. The OHCHR emphasized that "this can lead to misleading claims that cast doubt on scientific evidence, thereby stalling or undermining effective policy action."

Despite calls to protect the negotiations from the undue influence of these industries, there has been a failure to develop conflict of interest policies to protect the INC process and the future Conferences of the Parties (COPs). In this already vulnerable space, concerns over UNEP's objectivity reached a fever pitch before the negotiations began, with The Guardian reporting of "total infiltration" of both petrostates and lobbyists throughout the Plastics Treaty negotiations.

"The fossil fuel and petrochemicals industry lobbyists aren't just pulling strings behind the scenes – on the first day of INC-5.2, we saw them boldly take the floor, speak in plenary, and push their agenda in plain sight. Industry isn't just stalling progress – they're working in lockstep with petrostates in dragging the process toward the lowest common denominator. This may also reveal something else: public outcry over the plastics crisis shows them the tide is turning, and they're doubling down," says Rachel Radvany, CIEL Environmental Health Campaigner.

The outcome of these negotiations will have far-reaching consequences. Plastics pollute our bodies, our air, our water, and our soil, accelerating the climate crisis and the collapse of ecosystems. Without decisive action, plastic production could triple by 2050, exacerbating these impacts unless countries act now. While industry actors are here to protect

their profits and safeguard their commercial interests, the majority of stakeholders are here to protect public health, environmental integrity, and a livable planet for future generations.

“Petrostates flanked by industry have been content to run down the INC clock, counting on exhaustion and dwindling resources to deliver a hollow treaty. But civil society isn’t going anywhere. We’ll be here every step of the way – encouraging governments to do what they know is right, and what their communities both deserve, and need. We are also here to remind Member States that they hold the power and that political courage must prevail over corporate capture and petrostate power,” says Delphine Lévi Alvarès, CIEL Global Petrochemicals Campaign Manager.

#### Reflections from Supporting Organizations

Juressa Lee (Te Rarawa, Ngāpuhi, Ngāi te Rangi, Tupapa, Ngatangiia), Co-chair, International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Plastics (IIPFP)

For generations, we have witnessed the destruction wrought on our planet and communities by extractive and exploitative colonial and capitalist systems of oppression. Right now, Indigenous Peoples all around the world are dealing with hostile governments and industries that are waging wars against our communities and the environments that sustain us. The plastics industry and these treaty negotiations are no exception. The infiltration of these negotiations by extractive industries is a huge miscarriage of justice and is symptomatic of the structural issues behind the INC process, which devalues the voices of those bearing the brunt of the plastics crisis across its entire life cycle, from extraction to disposal. We call on Member States to do the right thing – recognise the rights of Indigenous Peoples and show courage by putting people, planet, and future generations first. Not profit and private interests.

Daniel Bertossa, General Secretary, Public Services International (PSI) Global Union

Millions of workers are exposed to chemicals of concern and toxic additives along the whole plastics life cycle, including frontline workers in municipal waste management, water and sanitation facilities, as well as health care workers and firefighters. The CIEL report exposes the reality of the corporate capture of our national and multilateral institutions, and substantiates our call for urgent change. Polluters need to be held accountable for the healthcare and environmental burden they place on societies and must pay back through fair taxation as per the implementation of the polluter pays principle. Those resources are urgently needed to (re)build public waste management infrastructures and water and sanitation facilities that are safe for users, workers and the environment, so we can drink water out of the tap; to fund occupational health and safety (OSH); and to fund adequate measures for a just transition for all concerned workers regardless of forms of employment. We urge UNEP and Member States to resist pressure from polluters and support an ambitious treaty that protects both workers and the environment.

Ana Rocha, Director of Global Plastics Program, Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA)

The stakes could not be higher at INC-5.2. Every day, we learn new and terrifying ways that plastic is harming us, and yet we as civil society are forced to compete for the attention of our leaders with the very companies that caused the plastic crisis in the first place. The only way for us to get a treaty strong enough to meet this existential threat is for the majority of countries to close their ears to the plastic

industry, and listen to the voices of the Indigenous Peoples, independent scientists, waste pickers, and frontline leaders demanding plastic production cuts.

Dr. Vishvaja Sambath, Centre for Financial Accountability (CFA), on behalf of the Break Free From Plastic movement

Communities are suffering from the emissions of the petroleum and petrochemical industries, which supply plastics' raw materials. Yet, at these negotiations, major oil-producing nations appear indifferent to both people and the planet. Their priority remains profit, so much so that they openly insist the treaty must only address plastic consumption and plastic waste mismanagement, while excluding any measures on production or extraction.

This is an insult to frontline communities battling cancer and other severe health impacts. Now is the time to kick out the polluters and finalise an ambitious health- and environment-centric treaty to reduce plastic production and end plastic pollution."

Pamela Miller, Co-Chair, International Pollutants Elimination Network (IPEN)

We are appalled not just by the sheer numbers of petrochemical industry lobbyists at the negotiations. Their presence represents an unbalanced power dynamic aimed at undermining the treaty and the urgent need to protect our health.

Bethanie Carney Almroth, Professor of Ecotoxicology at the University of Gothenburg, Scientist Coalition for an Effective

## Plastics Treaty

Robust independent science informs a clear understanding of the causes and effects of plastics pollution, and can support evidence-based decision making in developing policies to address these issues. Actors with conflicts of interest can delay or block policy by muddying the waters and creating doubt and uncertainty. While their tactics have extended to intimidating and harassing scientists, we remain committed to ensuring the best available science is accessible to negotiators and to support decision that protects humans and the environment.

Deborah Sy, Head of Global Public Policy and Strategy at the Global Center for Good Governance in Tobacco Control, on behalf of the Stop Tobacco Pollution Alliance (STPA)

This report highlights a failure to uphold basic principles of good governance. Even tobacco industry allies have been given a seat at the table in the Plastics Treaty negotiations, despite existing international rules under the WHO FCTC. It's a sobering example of how, in the absence of clear safeguards, the environmental platform could disregard existing health obligations. A treaty process that could be shaped by those with a commercial interest in plastic pollution is not just a conflict of interest – it risks eroding public trust.

Graham Forbes, Head of Delegation to the Global Plastics Treaty negotiations and Global Campaign Lead, Greenpeace USA

The flood of fossil fuel and petrochemical lobbyists in Geneva is undermining the world's best chance to end plastic pollution and protect human health. It is unacceptable that the industries profiting from the plastic pollution crisis are being given a front-row seat in solving it. These actors have

a vested interest in a weak agreement that allows them to produce plastics without limit for eternity, condemning future generations to a toxic future. Governments must show leadership, reject fossil fuel nonsense, and deliver the effective treaty that the world desperately needs. Polluters must not be allowed to write the rules.

Soledad Mella, waste picker leader from Chile, IAWP delegate at INC-5.2

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#### Methodology Note

For this analysis, we used the provisional list of participants at INC-5.2, released by UNEP this week, scraped and analyzed line by line.

CIEL's estimate is likely to be conservative, as the methodology relies on delegates at the talks to disclose their ties to fossil fuel or chemical industry interests, and some lobbyists may choose not to disclose their connection.

We considered a fossil fuel or chemical industry lobbyist to be anyone representing the interests of a fossil fuel company, chemical company, or its shareholders. This included organizations and trade associations representing the fossil fuel or chemical industries, or organizations including associations, nonprofits, or think tanks that received significant support from those industries, included industry figures in their governance, or have a track record of lobbying for pro-industry positions. All delegates at INC-5.2 are assumed to be attempting to influence the negotiations in some way.

Participants at INC-5.2 register to attend the negotiations with a delegation. These include national delegations, intergovernmental organizations, and civil society organizations. Businesses are not allowed to register directly to attend and so often appear with the delegation of trade associations or in the country's delegations. Delegates may provide further information when they register, which may include their role at another company or organization or their job title. Companies and organizations were researched using open sources, including their websites, lobbying databases, and reputable reporting.

To establish a delegate's link to the fossil fuel or chemical industry, we relied on the information provided in the UNEP provisional list of attendees, including both their delegation and any further affiliation the delegate disclosed. Any errors by UNEP in compiling the data may impact our analysis.