

WEC Action Forum: Brief Business discussions among WEC members on a hot topic
Global Plastics Treaty: Where are we after INC-4?
June 26th, 2024 - Summary

WHAT:

In 2022, the fifth session of the UN Environmental Assembly (UNEA-5) approved a historic resolution to end plastics pollution. This resolution sought to address the need for global action on the issue of plastics that saw plastics production double worldwide between 2001 and 2019, with only 7% being recycled, an additional 7% of plastics being openly burned, and 15% leaking to nature. An Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) was created, to develop an agreement that countries will adopt in spring 2025. This WEC Members Forum served as platform for 19 WEC and WHC members from various industries to learn about the status of the global plastics treaty since the fourth meeting of the INC, as well as how businesses can support this agreement.

SPEAKER & MODERATOR

- **Dr. Jihane Ball**, Lead Global Sustainability Director, **Dow**
- **Moderator: Frank Werner**, Director Global Thought Leadership and WEC Europe, **WEC**

KEY INSIGHTS AND MAJOR POINTS OF DISCUSSION:

1. **The most effective agreement will focus on areas with the most alignment.** Among countries represented on the INC, there is a high divergence of views on what the agreement should cover. Some groups believe the treaty should focus on waste management and disposal as solutions to reduce leakage, while others argue for a cap on plastics production and eliminating certain problematic chemicals and polymers. In order for the INC to come to consensus, focus has been on the areas of greatest alignment e.g., in need to address waste management infrastructure in areas where it is lacking. Once an initial framework is in place that addresses these areas of alignment, the agreement can continue to be built upon and improved over time. Ultimately it is predicted that a regular Conference of Parties (COP) will be established.
2. **One size does not fit all.** For the global plastics treaty to be effective, it must include as many countries as possible, including high plastics producers and countries with high amounts of leakage into nature. However, countries have varying infrastructure in place to support recycling and other circularity efforts. Because of this, countries will have differing starting points and needs, but the agreement should hold them accountable to reach these targets. A treaty recognizing that countries will have varying timelines and approaches based on their existing infrastructure will be more likely to secure wide adoption. One of the outcomes of an effective treaty will be in the ability for countries to move up the waste hierarchy by developing the infrastructure and systems necessary to build their capacity towards circularity. Companies in the EU are already operating under several important regulations such as [The Waste Framework Directive](#) and [Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation](#) which are likely to be more demanding than the evolving Global Treaty. Other world regions like the U.S. and especially those in the south will be more affected by the treaty, thus new regulation in these regions is expected.
3. **Companies with global goals and strategies for greater circularity rely on access to substances from waste.** While there are many short-lived uses of plastic, such as packaging, a majority of applications are multi-use and have longer lifespans, found e.g. in electronics, medical devices and transportation. For companies in these industries circularity is a valuable solution to plastics pollution, and a well-designed global agreement could be a catalyst for waste reduction. The investment gap in waste management in many world regions is significant. Thus, a global treaty that helps build a waste management and plastic waste recycling infrastructure is something that most companies will find beneficial and that all countries seem to be able to agree on quickly.
4. **Treaty negotiators aren't scientific experts on plastics education; thus, they need training.** In order to ensure that members of the INC are fully aware of the issues surrounding plastics, several organizations that produce, use and recycle plastics have partnered under the [Global Partners for Plastics Circularity](#) to educate negotiators about efficient strategies to make the agreement effective, most importantly by accelerating circularity.

Further Reading: -[The Plastic Waste Management Recycling Framework](#);
-[Business Coalition for a Global Plastics Treaty](#)