

Senator Tina Smith
60 Plato Blvd. East, Suite 220
Saint Paul, MN 55107
Phone (651) 221-1016

Dear Senator Smith,

Plastic production, use, and disposal threaten Earth's communities, air, water, biodiversity, and soils. With the United Nations (UN) Global Plastics Treaty negotiations now underway, the U.S. government (USG) has the unique opportunity to play a key role in establishing the change we need on a worldwide level. Instead of leading the world in generating the plastic pollution crisis, it's time for the USG to lead with ambitious solutions. We agree with the State Department's position that "national governments alone cannot solve the pollution crisis" – indeed, plastics are a global problem in need of global solutions. National, state, and local efforts to address the crisis to date have not been adequate. We need global, plastics-specific, binding, trackable, and enforceable solutions that result in reducing production and pollution. We need swift and urgent action. Solutions to plastic pollution exist. We must begin with a serious effort to reduce and ultimately end global production of wasteful and harmful single-use plastics and quickly establish systems offering reusable, refillable, regenerative, environmentally just, and nontoxic material alternatives.

To this end we urge you to support the following recommendations to the U.S. State Department to include in the USG's positions to the UN International Negotiating Committee (INC) for the Global Plastics Treaty:

1. Support mandatory and enforceable control measures and obligations to ensure results and accountability. Voluntary approaches will not get us there.

Without a mandatory targets and measures, this treaty will not achieve the results we need to stop this global environmental and human health catastrophe. The Treaty must provide a global monitoring and reporting framework under which progress can be accurately and transparently measured.

2. Prioritize the reduction of plastic production, with a rapid phase out of the most harmful plastics and additives.

Plastics and the thousands of hazardous chemicals they contain, and toxic microplastic and nanoplastic particles they shed, pose a serious and unacceptable risk to people and ecosystems around the world. This is an urgent public health emergency that threatens all of us as well as future generations. Top scientists have linked endocrine-disrupting chemicals in plastics to global sperm count declines, infertility and problems with fetal development. To protect human health, the environment, experts suggest 75% reduction in plastic production, consumption, and use. We need 75% reduction in consumption to stay close to a plastics-specific carbon budget even if "concerted action" takes place on plastics.

3. Close trade loopholes. The USG must support a plastics trade tracking system across the entire plastics lifecycle. The U.S. must implement bans on plastics and added chemicals with non-Party States and all plastic waste exports to non-OECD countries (OECD is Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, an international organization of 38 countries that work together to promote economic growth, prosperity, and sustainable development). It must also strictly minimize plastic waste trade and the export of plastic waste for incineration, co-incineration in cement kilns, other boilers, pyrolysis, gasification, and plastic-to-fuel processes.

4. Reduce plastic production by not permitting new or expanded facilities and infrastructure. We urge the USG to advocate for a swift transition from an economy based on fossil fuels and plastic production to one based on nontoxic, non-extractive, regenerative, and just sources of energy and materials. The USG must support an end to permitting new or expanded petrochemical and plastics facilities and their associated infrastructure. It is both environmentally and economically unwise to continue supporting lethal, nonrenewable industries when regenerative, sustainable, equitable, and healthy systems of reduction, reuse, and refill can better safeguard the economy, our global environment, and our communities. Continued production of plastics and fossil fuels supports environmental injustice and human rights abuses and exacerbate the planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. "The common thread that runs through this planetary crisis is unsustainable production and consumption," the U.N. states.

5. Eliminate support for plastics feedstocks, materials, and products.

The USG should investigate those industries' roles in hiding the important truths about plastic's many harms and invest in reduction and reuse alternatives. Look to the State of California Attorney General Rob Bonta, who last year launched such an investigation. When the U.S Department of Justice (DOJ) took such a step decades ago when the tobacco industry used similar deceptive tactics to sell cigarettes and other deadly tobacco products, the DOJ proved the tobacco industry had violated civil fraud and racketeering violations under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act.6.

Demand freedom from corporate influence. To increase transparency and scientific integrity and decrease misinformation, the USG should propose that industries whose activities will be directly regulated by this treaty not be permitted to participate in the negotiations. Profit, not plastic pollution reduction, is at the heart of the petrochemical and plastics industries' business models. They have a long track record of peddling misinformation in many forms. The USG should also support treaty provisions that would require manufacturers to identify plastic feedstocks, polymers, additives, residual chemicals, and products that include them, within a public global plastics chemicals information hub. Companies should be mandated to have accurate labeling for polymers and additives. Inaccurate, misleading claims should be prohibited.

7. Ensure scientific integrity and reject false solutions. The USG and other negotiating parties must rely on the best scientific information available when forming a global treaty. The science clearly shows numerous harms throughout the entire plastics lifecycle and reveals that there is no way to safely and sustainably dispose of plastic. It is critical that the treaty promote research and development into innovative reuse, refill, traditional, and plastic-free solutions while making sure to avoid regrettable substitutions. Plastics do not benignly biodegrade and cannot be landfilled, recycled, or burned without releasing greenhouse gasses and toxic chemicals. False solutions, including "chemical" or "advanced" recycling are not, "recycling" and should not be recognized by this global treaty. These "solutions" are a form of advanced pollution, recirculating toxic chemicals into our air, soil, and water. The warehouses and storage facilities for plastic waste in "chemical recycling" commonly result in fires from the highly flammable plastics.

8. Ensure solutions to plastic production, pollution, and waste management are environmentally just as well as environmentally sound. The toxic pollution associated with every step of the plastics lifecycle unjustly harms already underserved low-income, rural, minority fence line communities. Industries and governments disproportionately choose these communities as sacrifice zones for harmful and deadly industrial activities. Such severe injustice is recognized on a global level as a violation of human rights and failure of the USG to prioritize protection of its most vulnerable communities. The USG and UN must confront this injustice.

9. Guarantee a just transition for waste workers. A just transition begins with recognizing waste pickers as the workers who are providing a public service managing waste. Waste pickers and other waste workers have self-organized into cooperatives, unions, and other representative groups that can participate in local, national and international action plans. A just transition includes: Fair and reliable compensation to waste workers for their labor, the right to continue work, opportunities to transition into the zero-waste economy, the end of using hazardous materials and substances that imperil health, and the inclusion of social welfare programs. All these measures must be backed with financial resources and legally binding measures.

10. Phase out intentionally added microplastics. Prohibit the manufacture, import or export of microplastics designed for intentional addition to plastic products. Support measures to gradually end the intentional release of microplastics, including to the soil and to the air (i.e. fertilizers, pesticides, and oil and gas offshore chemicals with microplastics).

11. Produce, collect, report, and share data on plastics feedstocks and materials. The USG should support treaty provisions that require parties to produce, compile, and share data annually on the location and volume of plastic production, consumption, and use of exports and imports, environmental implications of plastics production, and other pertinent information. The USG needs to represent us, work on our behalf, and lead the world in taking the swift and bold action to address this global plastics crisis.

Read full letter and referenced articles at this link: [Letter to U.S. Government Officials involved in UN Global Plastics Treaty negotiations](#)

Sincerely,

Senator Amy Klobuchar
1200 Washington Avenue South, Room 250
Minneapolis, MN 55415
612-727-5220

Dear Senator Klobuchar,

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Sincerely,

Representative Brad Finstad
110 North Minnesota street, Suite 5
New Ulm, Minnesota 56073

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