

IAWP Response to Chair's Aid to Negotiation August 19th, 2026

The International Alliance of Waste Pickers (IAWP) notes the publication on 8 August 2026 of the Aid to Negotiations by the Chair of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. We wish to share our position with Committee members to support an ambitious treaty that includes a mandatory just transition.

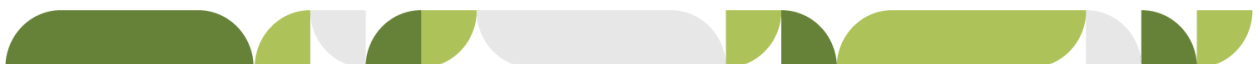
The IAWP recalls the progress made to date regarding the recognition of waste pickers' contribution as workers, especially waste pickers and other workers in informal and cooperative settings, as referenced in the UNEA 5.2 resolution. Though the resolution originally referred to "workers in informal and cooperative settings", we request employing the term "waste pickers and other workers," in the treaty text given the universal and central role of waste pickers and other workers in diverting plastic waste toward circular processes and mitigating the impact of plastic pollution.

The IAWP directly affiliates more than 500,000 organised workers in 38 countries, representing a universe of 20-40 million waste pickers who make a significant contribution to reducing plastic pollution every day. Over the course of the INC's negotiations, we have enjoyed the support of numerous governments who stand for a just transition article within the plastics treaty, and have now begun to recognise our essential contributions as strategic actors in materials management. Member States' commitment must ensure shared responsibility for addressing the global plastic pollution emergency while ensuring a just transition.

We reiterate our call on Member States to advocate for a *mandatory* article and additional cross-cutting provisions for just transition within the negotiating document. In this regard, we respectfully submit our suggested changes to the document under three main headings, in order of priority.

1. Mandatory Just Transition article (utilising *shall* language rather than *should* or *may*) and references to waste pickers
2. Cross-citation of provision of just transition and reference to waste pickers across the treaty text; mandatory reference to just transition in an article on financial mechanism¹

¹ The current article on **finance mechanisms** requires further reflection from member states as to how to incorporate mandatory just transition. Without a finance mechanism for a just transition, it will not materialise.



3. Inclusion of definitions for the term “Waste Pickers” and “just transition”². Those terms help to standardise the implementation of a just transition in a way that is as fair and inclusive as possible for all stakeholders, creating opportunities for decent work and ensuring that no one is left behind.

If Member States choose to use the Aid to Negotiation for textual discussions, we have provided edits and inputs, as shown in red in the annex below:

Article	Revised text	Rationale
ARTICLE 2. PRINCIPLES AND APPROACHES	(f) [The full, effective and meaningful engagement and participation of Indigenous Peoples and, as appropriate , the inclusion of local communities, including waste pickers and other workers when taking action to address plastic pollution, including in the marine environment]; and	Waste pickers collect and sort the majority of post-consumer plastics, yet our contributions frequently remain unrecognised. The International Alliance of Waste Pickers requests that the Principles and Approaches explicitly acknowledge waste pickers, who have the most to lose from changes in materials management systems. Such recognition will ensure that the treaty accurately reflects the experience of those directly responsible for managing and preventing plastic waste pollution.
ARTICLE 3. DEFINITIONS	(d) “Waste Pickers” means people who participate (individually or collectively) in the collection, separation, sorting, transport, and sale of recyclable and reusable materials and products (paper, plastic, metal, glass, and other materials) in an informal or semi-formal capacity, as own-account workers, in a cooperative or social and solidarity	We urge the inclusion of a clear definition for waste pickers in the forthcoming legal instrument to address plastic pollution, either in the definition section, annexure, or within any future guidelines developed under this legal framework.

² A definition for **Just Transition** must be developed for the treaty, using as a basis the ILO guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all (Geneva, ILO, 2015).



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	economy setting, and as workers who subsequently achieved formal work arrangements through their organizations.	
ARTICLE 4. PLASTIC PRODUCTS	...In implementing paragraph 1 of this Article, each Party shall, as appropriate, take into account the following:... e) where relevant, the incorporation of traditional knowledge, the knowledge, sciences and practices of Indigenous Peoples and, including waste pickers, and local knowledge systems.	The voice of waste pickers is essential because we determine whether an item will truly be given a second life or end up in a landfill. Our experience at sorting facilities dictates which colours, resin types, and additives are mechanically feasible to process and separate at scale. Therefore, involving us from the very beginning is the only real way to achieve efficient eco-design.
ARTICLE 7. PLASTIC WASTE MANAGEMENT	2. In implementing paragraph 1 of this Article, each Party shall, taking into account national circumstances and capabilities, take measures, including to: (g) Ensure inclusion of waste pickers in plastic waste management.	Waste pickers substantially mitigate plastic pollution, and governments have begun to acknowledge our essential contributions. In Brazil, plastic recycling rates have increased because regulatory frameworks enable waste pickers' participation. In India, the recently promulgated solid waste management rules now strengthen the mandate of integrating waste pickers. These outcomes represent only part of the progress realised to date, and have been possible because respective legal instruments



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		explicitly mandate the integration of waste pickers into waste management.
ARTICLE 9. JUST TRANSITION	1. In implementing this Convention, each Party shall, as appropriate and taking into account national circumstances and capabilities, promote and facilitate a just transition, in particular for those disproportionately impacted, with a view to promoting decent work, opportunities, and enhancing social protection.	From the start of the negotiations, the majority of member states have strongly supported mandatory language in the Just Transition article, especially for Indigenous Peoples and waste pickers. Weakening the Just Transition article by using the words <i>should</i>, or as <i>appropriate</i>, risks undermining the progress we have achieved in these negotiations. By using mandatory rather than voluntary measures, member states will ensure justice for the most vulnerable communities, including waste pickers, who have been and are vital to reducing plastic pollution. The IAWP further requests that the section on just transition explicitly reference livelihood security, decent work, living income, social protection, and occupational safety for waste pickers, and cite the International Labour Organisation's Just Transition Guidelines and Policy Guidelines for Decent Work in Recycling.



Article	Revised text	Rationale
	2. In taking measures to implement paragraph 1 of this Article, each Party shall should take into account, as appropriate , the situation of, and engage, workers in the formal and informal sectors, including workers in the plastics industry, waste pickers , small-scale and artisanal fishers...	Waste pickers are central to mitigating plastic pollution and must be included in any listing of relevant worker stakeholders in the text. Over 114 countries have requested, individually or collectively, the inclusion of a mandatory just transition provision over the course of these negotiations, demonstrating considerable consensus.
ARTICLE 13. NATIONAL PLANS	3. In implementing paragraphs 1 and 2 of this Article, Parties should consult relevant national stakeholders to facilitate the development, financing , implementation, review and updating of their national plans, including measures to mitigate plastic pollution and ensure just transition.	National plans must include just transition measures or else they are unlikely to be implemented.

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