

October 17, 2024

Mr. António Guterres
Secretary-General
United Nations Headquarters
New York, NY 10017, USA

Sub: Concerns Regarding Recent Public Statements by UNEP Executive Director Ms. Inger Andersen

Dear Secretary-General Guterres,

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to express our deep concerns about recent public statements made by Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), including the statement delivered on your behalf at the high-level event [Galvanizing Momentum for the Global Plastic Pollution Instrument](#) held on the margins of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly. These remarks are part of a concerning pattern of statements that risk prejudicing the outcome of the negotiations of the international legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution (plastics treaty) by narrowing down the scope of the instrument. UNEA Resolution 5/14 clearly outlines the need for a full lifecycle approach to addressing plastic pollution, which includes production. We are accustomed to Ms. Andersen making independent statements; however, issuing a statement on behalf of the UNSG could be perceived as suggesting a unified position across the UN system. This is a serious organizational misstep, especially when it goes against what other agencies and special procedures, such as the [UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#), the [UN Development Programme](#), the [UN Special Rapporteur on toxics and human rights](#), and the [UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and the Environment](#) have said on the topic.

Past and recent public statements by Ms. Andersen (relevant parts transcribed and linked in the Annex to this letter) give a restrictive interpretation of the scope of the future instrument by focusing exclusively on single-use and short-lived plastics, excluding extraction and production from the full lifecycle of plastics. While the statements take a position on the measures to reduce production, they focus exclusively on demand-side measures, ignoring recent models and scientific evidence demonstrating that these would be insufficient to fulfill the mandate from UNEA Resolution 5/14 to “end plastic pollution.” In the intervention made on your behalf at the aforementioned high-level event on the margins of the UN General Assembly, Ms. Andersen emphasized that the treaty should focus on single-use and short-lived plastics, suggesting, against all evidence, that any provisions going beyond this reduced scope would amount to banning essential plastics and creating obstacles to the needed energy transition. She repeated this stance in public interviews that appeared in [Agence France-Presse](#) and [NPR](#) and in speeches delivered at the [167th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives](#) and the [Ministerial Meeting of the G20 Environment and Climate Sustainability Working Group](#).

These statements disregard the work done by the Ad-Hoc Open-Ended Expert Working Group convened under UNEP, which led to the adoption of Resolution UNEA 5/14. It also contradicts [scientific evidence](#) that the full lifecycle of plastics begins with extraction and production and that supply-side measures are necessary to effectively address plastic pollution. Moreover, Ms. Andersen's statements stand in contrast to [UNEP's own working definition](#), which states that a "life-cycle approach to plastics considers the impacts of all the activities and outcomes associated with the production and consumption of plastic materials, products and services - from raw material extraction and processing (refining, cracking, polymerization)...[to] maintenance and end of life management." Furthermore, this interpretation diverges from widely accepted definitions of plastic pollution, such as the one provided by the [Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\)](#), which asserts that plastic pollution is "broadly, all emissions and risks resulting from plastics production, use, waste management and leakage."

Ms. Andersen has also publicly stated in at least [one public interview](#) that discussions around production caps are "not intelligent." Statements like these prejudice essential provisions under negotiation that are crucial to ending plastic pollution and are disrespectful to the [Member State representatives](#), parliamentarians, [independent scientists](#), [economists](#), [Indigenous Peoples](#), [frontline communities and workers](#), and [civil society organizations](#) who have been reiterating the need to address plastic production under the future plastics treaty.

Lastly, Ms. Andersen's stance contradicts the urgent climate action needed to meet the 1.5°C goal of the Paris Agreement. Experts predict that plastic polymer production will [triple between 2019 and 2050](#) and could consume up to [one-third of the remaining global carbon budget by 2050](#), even in a decarbonized scenario, and be a [major driver of oil and gas demand](#).

You have rightfully acknowledged in your message at [World Environment Day](#) in June 2023 that "plastic is made from fossil fuels - the more plastic we produce, the more fossil fuel we burn, and the worse we make the climate crisis." Your calls tying action on plastics to climate align with the most recent [scientific](#) and [economic evidence](#). Recent and recurrent messaging from Ms. Andersen conversely suggested that reducing primary plastic production, as suggested in the draft text of the future plastic treaty, would prevent addressing the climate crisis. Preventing exponential growth and reducing overall plastic production is essential to end plastic pollution and aligns with the broader goal of phasing out fossil fuels.

We've also noticed with concern that in a [webinar](#) on the future plastics treaty, Ms. Andersen's comments are being used by industry representatives to call for the elimination of the measures aiming to deal with production levels from the plastic treaty, and focus instead "on single-use or plastics that end up in the environment."

This is not the first time civil society organizations and rightsholders have expressed our concern. In 2023, before INC-2, more than 100 civil society and rightsholders organizations from more than 50 countries [sent a letter](#) to Ms. Andersen and Jyothi Mathur-Filipp, the Executive Secretary of

the INC. The letter noted a discrepancy between some Member States' support for upstream approaches, which include production, and the lack of similar ambition from both Ms. Andersen and Ms. Mathur-Filipp. The letter also raised concerns in the past over the manner in which Ms. Andersen and the INC Secretariat have conducted INC negotiations - calling for transparency in the dealing of the Secretariat to avoid any possible conflict of interest issues. Another [letter](#) was sent to Ms. Andersen and Ms. Mathur-Filipp in April 2024 on the conflict of interest, in particular from the oil, gas, and petrochemical sectors in UN spaces.

We kindly request your support in asking Ms. Andersen to:

1. Retract her public statements containing subjective affirmations about the discussion on production caps not being intelligent,
2. Refrain from exceeding her role as the convener of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) and
3. Align her public communications with the most recent scientific evidence regarding the comprehensive scope required to effectively address the plastic pollution crisis.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned Organizations

1. **Action for Nurturing Children & Environment, Inc. Philippines**, Relanie Nogas, Program Coordinator
2. **Adansonia.green, Senegal**, Aminata Farima TIDJANI
3. **Alaska Community Action on Toxics**, Pamela Miller, Executive Director
4. **Alianza Basura Cero Chile**, Manuel Rojo, coordinator nacional
5. **Almang Market, South Korea**, Ko Kumsook, Representative
6. **ALRWAD FOUNDATION For PROJECTS and DEVELOPMENT**, Elham Refaat Abdel Aziz, CEO
7. **Aotearoa Plastic Pollution Alliance, New Zealand**, Liam Prince, Chair
8. **Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment (AWHHE)**, Dr. Elena Manvelyan, President
9. **Arnika, Czech Republic**, Jindrich Petrlik, Executive Director of the Toxics and Waste Programme at Arnika
10. **Association For Promotion Sustainable Development**, Mange Ram Adhana, President
11. **Australian Marine Conservation Society**, Darren Kindleysides, CEO
12. **Azul**, Marce Gutierrez-Graudiņš, Executive Director
13. **BAN Toxics, Philippines**, Jam Lorenzo, Deputy Executive Director
14. **Basel Action Network, USA**, Jim Puckett, Executive Director
15. **Barranquilla+20, Columbia**, Fernanda Moncayo, Founder Ecorave
16. **Beaver County Marcellus Awareness Community (BCMAC)**, Hilary O'Toole - Executive Director
17. **Breathe Free Detroit, USA**, KT Morelli
18. **Buklod Tao, Inc. Philippines**, Buklod Tao, Advisor

19. **California Communities Against Toxics, USA**, Jane Williams, Executive Director
20. **Center for Biological Diversity**, Julie Teel Simmonds, Senior Counsel
21. **Center for Coalfield Justice, USA**, Sarah Martik, Executive Director
22. **Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL)**, Amanda Kistler, Acting President
23. **Center for Public Health and Environmental Development (CEPHED), Nepal**, Ram Charitra Sah
24. **Centre de Recherche et d'Education pour le Développement (CREPD)**, Gilbert KUEPOUO, Executive Director
25. **Centre for Chronic Disease Control, New Delhi, India**, Dr. Shyamala K. Mani
26. **Centre for Environment Justice and Development, Kenya**, Griffins Ochieng, Executive Director
27. **Centre for Financial Accountability, India**, Swathi Seshadri, Director - Research
28. **Centre International de Droit de l'Environnement**, Madeleine Rivoir, Member.
29. **Center to Combat Corruption and Cronyism (C4 Center), Malaysia**, Pushpan Murugiah, Chief Executive Officer
30. **Children's Environmental Health Foundation**, Michael Musenga, Executive Director and National Lead Elimination Advisor
31. **Coalition Clean Baltic, Sweden (regional)**, Eugeniy Lobanov, Co-Chair
32. **Colectiva Malditos Plásticos**, Claudia Romero
33. **Community Action Against Plastic Waste (CAPws)**, Ahmed Tiamiyu - Executive Director
34. **Consumers' Association of Penang, Malaysia**, Mageswari Sangaralingam, Chief Executive
35. **Društvo Ekologi brez meja**, Katja Sreš, president
36. **EARTHCARE, Bahamas**, Gail Woon, Founder
37. **Earthday.org**, Aminah Taariq-Sidibe Manager of End Plastic Initiatives
38. **Eco Circular India Foundation**, Saroj Badgular, Founder/Director
39. **Ecotourism & Conservation Society of Sikkim, India**, Rajendra P Gurung CEO
40. **Ecological Observation and Wetlands Conservation - ECOTON, Indonesia**, Prigi Arisandi, Founder
41. **EcoWaste Coalition of the Philippines**, Aileen Lucero, National Coordinator
42. **Environment and Social Development Organization-ESDO**, Dr. Shahriar Hossain, Secretary General
43. **Environmental & Public Health Consulting**, Ann Blake, Ph.D., Founder & Principal
44. **Environmental Defence Canada**, Karen Wirsig, Senior Program Manager, Plastics
45. **Environmental Investigation Agency UK** Mary Rice, Executive Director
46. **Environmental Justice Foundation**, Steve Trent, CEO and Founder
47. **Environmental NGO "Foundation to support civil initiatives"**, Tajikistan PhD, Muazama Burkhanova, Chair
48. **Environmental Quality Protection Foundation (EQPF), Taiwan**, Dr. Ying-Shih Hsieh, Chairman
49. **Eureka Recycling**, Katie Drews, Co-President & CEO
50. **Fenceline Watch**, Yvette Arellano, Founder | Director
51. **Fercomex-Terre de chez nous, DRC**, Michel Kaozi, Co-Founder

52. **FoCo Trash Mob, Beyond Plastics Affiliate**, Maureen McCarthy
53. **Foundation for Environment and Development (FEDEV), Cameroon**, Nchunu Justice Sama, Executive Director of FEDEV
54. **FracTracker Alliance**, Shannon Smith, Executive Director
55. **FreshWater Accountability Project, USA**, Lea Harper, Managing Director
56. **Friends of the Earth Canada**, Beatrice Olivastri, CEO
57. **Fronteras Comunes**, Marisa Jacott Directora. México
58. **Fundacion Lengua Chile**, Josefa Valenzuela, Cofundadora
59. **Gallifrey Foundation, Switzerland**, Antoinette Vermilye, Co-Founder
60. **Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA), Global**, Ana Rocha, Director of the Global Plastics Program
61. **Greenpeace**, Graham Forbes, Head of Delegation to the Global Plastics Treaty
62. **Green Vientiane**, Serge Doussantousse
63. **Green Korea United (South Korea)**, JEONG Kyuseok, Secretary General
64. **groundWork, Friends of the Earth South Africa**, Rico Euripidou, Chemicals Campaigner
65. **Health and Environment Justice Support**, Olga Speranskaya, Alexandra Caterbow, Co-Directors
66. **Health Care Without Harm Southeast Asia**, Ramon San Pascual MPH, Executive Director
67. **Health Environment and Climate Action Foundation Nepal**, Mahesh Nakarmi
68. **Humusz Szövetség**, György Szabó, Vice President
69. **Hamraah Foundation**, Mohammed Javed Qureshi
70. **International Monitor Formosa Plastics Alliance**, Nancy Bui, Co-Founder
71. **International Pollutants Elimination Network (IPEN), Global**, Yuyun Ismawati, Pamela Miller, co-chairs
72. **Just Transition Alliance**, Jose Bravo, Executive Director
73. **Justice For Formosa's Victims**, Nancy Bui, Founder/VP of External Affairs
74. **Kuala Langat Environmental Activity Association, Malaysia**, Thew Kim Guan, Chairman
75. **Korean Women's Environmental Network (KWEN)**, Leeahn Soyoung, Representative
76. **Korea Federation for Environmental Movements**, Shin Wooyong, Secretary General
77. **Küste gegen Plastik e.V., Germany**, Jennifer Timrott, Board Member
78. **La Grande Puissance de Dieu**, Joseph Denougbeto, President
79. **NEB No es Basura**, Alain Castruita
80. **Nexus3 Foundation, Indonesia**, Krishna Zaki
81. **National Council of the Green Consumers Network in Korea**, Yoo Mi Hwa
82. **Nipe Fagio, Tanzania**, Marie Kwirine, Policy Coordinator
83. **Objectif Zéro Plastique, France**, Jules Vagner, Founder/President
84. **Observatoire du principe pollueur-payeur**, Flore Berlingen, Co-founder
85. **Ocean. Now!**, Meike Schützek
86. **OceanCare**, Fabienne McLellan, Managing Director
87. **Our Sea of East Asia Network, Republic of Korea**, Dr. Sunwook Hong, President

88. **Pacific Environment and Resources Center – Vietnam**, Quach Thi Xuan, Vietnam Country Director
89. **Pacific Islands Climate Action Network**, Rufino Varea - Regional Director
90. **Pan African Vision for the Environment, Nigeria**, Anthony Akpan
91. **ParyavaranMitra, India**, Mahesh Pandya, Director
92. **Plastic Free Future, USA**, Alejandra Warren, Co-Founder and Executive Director
93. **PASUP Pittsburgh PA, USA**, Dianne Peterson
94. **Plastic Free Seas**, Dana Winograd - Executive Director
95. **Plastic Pollution Coalition**, Dianna Cohen, Co-Founder and CEO
96. **Plastic Soup Foundation, The Netherlands**, Maria Westerbos, Founder/Director
97. **PlastiCo. Project Foundation Ecuador**, Laura Suárez Co-Founder and National Director
98. **Polish Zero Waste Association, Poland**, Piotr Barczak, Co-founder, Board Member
99. **Race for Water Foundation**, Camille Rollin
100. **RAPAL Uruguay**, María Isabel Cárcamo - Coordinator
101. **Red de Acción por los Derechos Ambientales**, Alejandra Parra legal representative, Chile
102. **Red Mexicana de Acción Ecológica, Mexico**, Larisa de Orbe
103. **Retorna (SPAIN)**, Miquel Roset, director
104. **Reacción Climática – Bolivia**, Carmen Capriles
105. **Sahabat Alam Malaysia (Friends of the Earth)**, Meenakshi Raman, President
106. **Sciaena NGO**, Valentina Muñoz Farías, Marine litter policy officer
107. **Sciencecorps United States**, Dr. Kathleen Burns, Executive Director
108. **SEAS AT RISK**, Dr Monica Verbeek, Executive Director
109. **Seoul Korea Federation for Environmental Movements (Seoul KFEM)**, Youngsik Choi, Chair
110. **Society of Native Nations**, Frankie Orona, Executive Director
111. **Surfrider Foundation**, Jennifer Savage, Sr Mgr, Plastic Pollution Initiative
112. **SusPacific Islands Climate Action Network**, Rufino Varea, Director
113. **Sustainable Environment Development Initiative, Nigeria**, Tom Aneni - Director
114. **Sustainable Research and Action for Environmental Development (SRADev Nigeria)**, Dr. Leslie ADOGAME, Executive Director
115. **Taller Ecologista, Argentina**, Cecilia Bianco, Coordinator
116. **Tearfund**, Mari Williams, Head of Public Policy
117. **Texas Campaign for the Environment**, Robin Schneider, Texas Campaign for the Environment
118. **Thant Myanmar**, Friedor Jeske
119. **The Center for Oceanic Awareness, Research, and Education (COARE)**, United States Christopher Chin, Executive Director
120. **The Descendants Project**, Jo Banner, Founder/Director
121. **The Network for a Carcinogen-free Society, South Korea**, Lim Sanghyuk, Representative
122. **Toxisphera, Brazil**, Zuleica Nycz, CEO, Founder
123. **Trash Free Trails**, Dom Ferris, Founder, CEO

124. **Trash Hero World**, Seema Prabhu
125. **Upholding Life And Nature (ULAN)**, Ronaldo R. Gutiérrez, Executive Director
126. **Vessel Project of Louisiana, USA**, Roishetta Ozane, Founder/Director/CEO
127. **Waterkeeper Alliance**, Marc Yaggi, CEO
128. **Women Engage for a Common Future**, Sascha Gabizon, Executive Director
129. **Wonjin Institute for Occupational and Environmental Health, South Korea**, Dr. Won Kim, Director
130. **ZERO - Association for the Sustainability of the Earth System**, Susana Fonseca - Vice-President
131. **Zero Waste Europe**, Joan Marc Simon, Founder
132. **Zero Waste Himalaya, India**, Roshan Rai, core team member
133. **Zero Waste Sabah**, Ruth Yap, Founder and Chair
134. **Zero Waste Kiel e.V., Germany**, Marie Delaperrière Board Member

Annex

1. Speech delivered at [Ministerial Meeting of the G20 Environment and Climate Sustainability Working Group](#), “The G20 must lead at critical juncture for environment and prosperity”, October 3, 2024

“This instrument is not about banning essential plastics. We will need plastic in clean transport, the energy transition, construction, healthcare and more. But we must tackle single-use and short-lived plastics. And, through a life-cycle approach, we need to ensure that the plastic we do use stays in the economy, not the environment.”

2. Intervention delivered at the high-level event [Galvanizing Momentum for the Global Plastic Pollution Instrument](#) on September 25, 2024, on behalf of the United Nations Secretary-General

“This instrument is not about banning plastic; plastic is incredibly useful. We need it in clean transport, electric vehicles. We need it in the energy transition. We need it in construction. We need it in healthcare and more... We need to be far more careful about how, where, and when we use this durable and flexible material. We must tackle single-use plastic that is short-lived... Now, it is critical that this treaty will have a strong start, so that we can build it further out in the future as the science becomes clearer...It is critical that we understand that by taking out single-use and short-lived plastics, we will force a reduction in the production of raw polymers for those products.”

3. Statements captured/delivered in [Agence France-Presse](#) article, 'Convergence' growing on global plastics treaty: UN environment chief, September 23, 2024

“We want to see a reduction in the production of raw polymer for that which is single use and short lived,”

“I don't see car parts and plane wings and things like that swimming around in the ocean,”

“We have to have a more refined conversation than just cap, no cap, because it's not an intelligent conversation.”

4. Speech delivered at the 167th meeting of the [Committee of Permanent Representatives](#), “A vital three months for environmental diplomacy,” September 12, 2024

“As I have said many times, this instrument is not about banning plastics. Plastic is – and will remain – an incredibly useful material. But we need to be careful about how and where we use it, from clean transport and energy to construction and healthcare. We must tackle single-use and short-lived plastics. And, by taking a life-cycle approach, we need to ensure that the plastics we do use stays in the economy”

5. [The 10th Special Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment](#), September 5, 2024

"Allow me, therefore, a few words on the plastic treaty negotiations. This instrument is not about banning all plastics. Plastic is – and will remain – an incredibly useful material. But we need to be deliberate about how and where we use it: in clean transport and energy, in construction, in healthcare, in certain food delivery systems, and so on. We need to tackle single-use and short-lived plastics, a large part of which ends up in the environment. And, by taking a lifecycle approach, we need to ensure that the plastics we do use stay in the economy, not leak into the environment."

6. Interview quotes in National Public Radio's piece, "[Creating a throw-away culture: How companies ingrained plastics in modern life](#)," June 9, 2024

"We'll continue to need plastic for specific uses," Inger Andersen, executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme, said at the latest round of U.N. negotiations in Canada in April. "But there's a growing agreement," she said, that a lot of single-use plastic "can probably go."

7. [Statement delivered at the DAVOS event: How Leaders and Policymakers Can Turn the Tide on Plastic Pollution](#), January 17, 2024

"...let's just be careful exactly how we frame this, reduce that which goes into the environment, and then maybe something about raw polymers, but let's understand that with the sort of stuff that is in our collective to do list, which we absolutely want to see, and someone else that is clever than me, needs to sit down and calculate whether that translates into raw polymer.. actually reduction, or not, because I wanna see these windmills, the swingings and the planes, going with lighter and less fuel consumption..." (Video timestamp 41:58)