

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 20, 2024

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) for a legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution is an important opportunity for countries across the world to come together on a shared goal of protecting our planet from the harms of plastics. President Biden prioritized environmental justice in his April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023 Executive Order when he said that, “Our Nation needs an ambitious approach to environmental justice that is informed by scientific research, high-quality data, and meaningful Federal engagement with communities with environmental justice concerns...” The U.S. needs to make the same commitment globally and that’s why we urge you to support the strongest agreement possible. We will work in Congress to pass laws supporting the finalized agreement provisions.

U.S. laws have clearly failed to protect Americans, and especially frontline communities, from the impacts of industrial facilities, including petrochemical production. The result is that communities of color and low-wealth communities already overburdened with pollution continue to be targeted for the siting of polluting facilities. This is why we have and will continue to push for legislation that addresses the plastic production and pollution crisis in Congress. We urge you to push for the strongest agreement possible independent of the situation in the U.S.

While it would be a disappointment if the world’s biggest plastic producers do not initially sign onto an ambitious agreement, it would be an even greater failure to negotiate a final agreement that lacks ambition commensurate with the scope of the problem or omits the fundamental elements needed to address it. The world can come together to address plastic production and pollution which will make significant strides in tackling this problem. A strong agreement will change markets and business models, and better enable implementing legislation in the U.S.

The U.S.’ recent ratification of the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol to join 137 countries in limiting hydrofluorocarbons demonstrates that Congress can act to join an ambitious international agreement to address a shared environmental threat. The Kigali Amendment was ratified with bipartisan support after a coalition of manufacturers and environmentalists worked together to ensure that U.S. companies had access to foreign markets. We hope the world negotiates the necessary steps to fully address this crisis so that Congress can fulfill its role of taking up an agreement and ratifying it or passing the laws necessary to implement it.

As such, we urge the Department of State to support three negotiating principles:

- A meaningful instrument must include binding production limits.
- Rules of procedure must be adopted that stop a small number of plastic-producing countries from undermining the rest of the world’s efforts to address the plastic production crisis, and;
- Parties to the agreement must be allowed the tools to protect themselves and their economies.

*A meaningful instrument must include binding production limits.*

Plastics are harmful across their entire lifecycle, from the toxic chemicals that are released during production of raw materials to the microplastics that result from plastic waste. An agreement that fails to meaningfully address plastic production with binding time-bound targets will not be a success.

*Rules of procedure must be adopted that stop a small number of plastic-producing countries from undermining the rest of the world's efforts to address the plastic production crisis.*

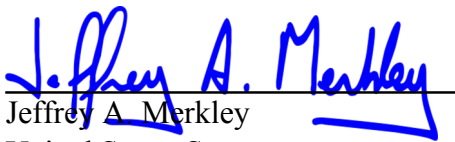
There is strong global momentum to finalize an ambitious legally binding agreement by the end of 2024. While the goal of any negotiation is to reach a consensus product that all countries can support, the plastic pollution crisis is too dire to allow a small number of intransigent countries to delay or derail the process. The U.S. should push for the full application of rules and procedures that respect and uphold countries' right to vote in order to enable robust collaboration and deliberation while ultimately allowing for a majority-driven process to protect ambition on a meaningful timeline.

*Parties to the agreement must be allowed the tools to protect themselves and their economies.*


Non-party trade provisions are essential to a strong agreement. They ensure that parties to the agreement are able to protect themselves and their economic interests from countries that do not join. We ask the U.S. to support robust trade provisions that provide a level playing field for industries everywhere that plastics are produced, safeguard progress made by agreement party states from being undermined by non-party states and ensure that industries in countries that cannot or will not join the agreement must play by the same rules as everyone else.

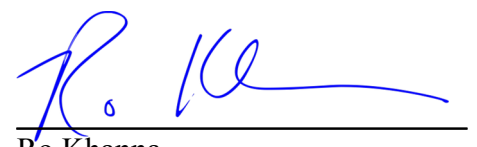
The international legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution is an unprecedented opportunity for the world to come together to address our plastic pollution crisis and our climate crisis in tandem. We ask you to use U.S. influence to support a commensurately ambitious agreement that will address all aspects of the plastic pollution crisis enabling Congress to then pass implementing legislation.

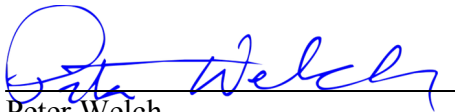
Sincerely,

  
Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator

  
Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress

  
Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator

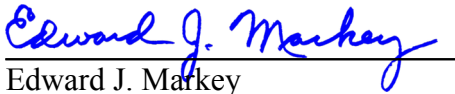
  
Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress



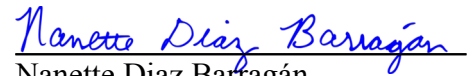
Peter Welch  
United States Senator



Emanuel Cleaver, II  
Member of Congress



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator




Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Member of Congress



Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



Kevin Mullin  
Member of Congress



Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



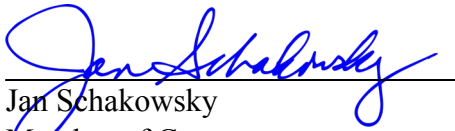
Katie Porter  
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress

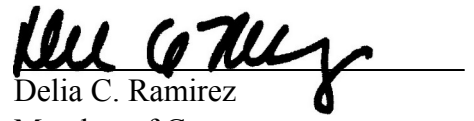


Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



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Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



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Delia C. Ramirez  
Member of Congress



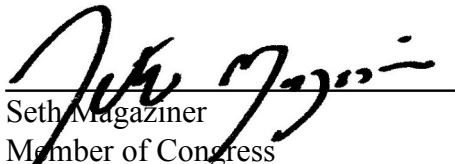
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Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress



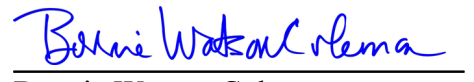
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Robert Garcia  
Member of Congress



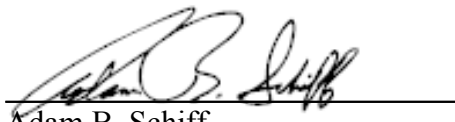
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Seth Magaziner  
Member of Congress



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Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress



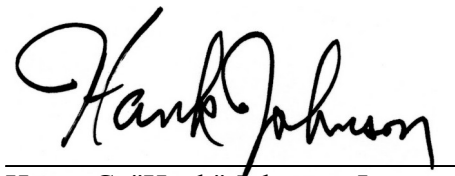
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Adam B. Schiff  
Member of Congress



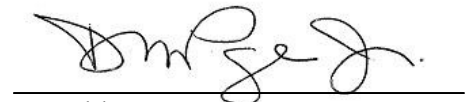
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Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
Member of Congress




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Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress



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Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
Member of Congress



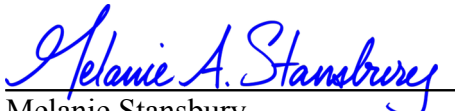
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David J. Trone  
Member of Congress

**Ed Case**

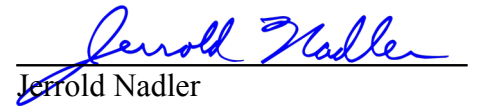
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Ed Case  
Member of Congress




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Melanie Stansbury  
Member of Congress




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Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress




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Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress




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Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress




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Eric Swalwell  
Member of Congress



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Linda T. Sánchez  
Member of Congress



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Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress