

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

August 4, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20451

Dear Secretary Rubio,

We write to express our frustration that a small number of plastic producing nations have stymied the world's desire for an ambitious agreement at the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) for a legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution and to urge the United States to push for an ambitious agreement. INC 5.2 is the last opportunity for countries around the world to come together under the auspices of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) on the shared goal of protecting our planet from the harm of plastics. We urge the United States to support global targets for source reduction, a mandatory phase-out of the most harmful chemicals used to make plastic products, and a mandatory phase-out of problematic plastic products and those that are easily avoidable.

Plastics are harmful across their entire lifecycle, from the toxic chemicals that are released during the production of raw materials to the microplastics that result from plastic waste. Success in addressing the crisis requires an agreement that meaningfully addresses the full scope of pollution from plastics including plastic production, chemicals of concern, and products of concern.

At INC 5.1, more than 100 nations came together to say that a cap on production is essential.¹ We urge you to support rules of procedure that include a voting mechanism so a small number of plastic-producing countries from undermining the rest of the world's efforts and non-party trade provisions that allow countries to protect themselves and their economies from countries that do not join the agreement. The final agreement must be significantly stronger than the Chair's text if it is to have the requisite ambition to combat this crisis.

The United States needs to do more to address plastics at home. Domestic laws are failing to protect Americans, especially frontline communities, from the impacts of industrial facilities, including petrochemical production and plastic incineration. 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.

United States laws are also failing to address plastic waste. The recycling rate for post-consumer plastic waste in the United States is estimated to be around 5 percent.² The recycling rate for PET bottles was just 29.1 percent in 2018.³ If the United States cannot manage its own waste stream then it cannot serve as a model to be replicated globally. This is why we have and will continue to push for legislation that addresses the plastic production and pollution crisis in Congress.

Finance will be a key component to any agreement. Dramatic cuts to foreign assistance for the world's most vulnerable signals that the U.S. will be unable to provide finance to help other countries meet their obligations under any agreement. The recently passed Rescissions Act eliminated over \$8 billion in foreign aid. Included in

¹ www.bridgetobusan.com/ppp

² <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0921344922002087?via%3Dihub>

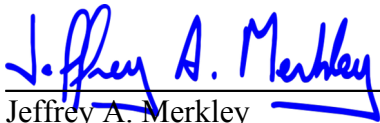
³ <https://www.epa.gov/facts-and-figures-about-materials-waste-and-recycling/plastics-material-specific-data>

those cuts were United States. funding contributions to international organizations, including almost all contributions to the UNEP. These cuts undermine our moral authority in negotiations like INC 5.2.

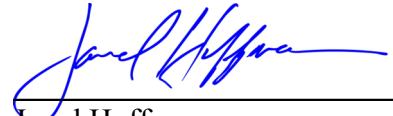
If the United States is not able to drive ambition, the majority that wants a strong agreement should be encouraged to move forward together. The plastic pollution crisis is too dire to allow a small number of intransigent countries to delay or derail action. There is strong global momentum to finalize an ambitious, legally binding agreement and agreements like the Ottawa Treaty on landmines show that a strong coalition of the willing can drive meaningful change.

INC 5.2 is the last opportunity for the world to come together to address the plastic pollution crisis and the climate crisis in tandem under the guidance of the UNEP. We ask you to use our nation's influence to advance an ambitious agreement that includes real, enforceable commitments to reduce plastic production, phase out chemicals of concern and problematic and avoidable uses of plastics across the full life cycle. If a strong agreement cannot be reached in Geneva, we hope that the majority of the world that wants to see ambitious action comes together in a different forum to negotiate an agreement.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress
Ranking Member, House Natural
Resources Committee



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator