



Opening statement of Public Services International (PSI) on behalf of the Workers and Trade Unions Major Group at the Second Part of the Fifth Session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution (INC-5.2)
(5 August 2025, Geneva, Switzerland)

Thank you Mr Chair,
Excellencies, distinguished Delegates, UNEP Secretariat,

Public Services International (PSI) - together with the global trade union movement - directly represent over 300 million workers worldwide, including all those along the plastics value chain.

We have reviewed the Chair's Text and we note with great concern that the world of work remains largely forgotten and its key challenges unaddressed under the current text.

First, for the instrument to be effective it must include **all** the millions of workers concerned by the forthcoming transition. Hence, references to "workers" in the Preamble and in the other relevant sections of the text, including in Article 8 on Just Transition, must be consistently to ***"all workers along the full lifecycle of plastics, in all forms of employment in the formal or informal economy, including waste pickers and other vulnerable workers"***. The current text is too focussed on the downstream part of the chain leaving out millions and creates an unacceptable hierarchy of vulnerability among workers.

Second, not only **the protection of human health must remain the core objective of the instrument** under Art. 1 – together with the protection of the environment as per the WHO concept of One Health - and requires a meaningful standalone article; but the text also needs to explicitly mention and address the issue of ***"Occupational Health and Safety (OSH)"***, which is integral to human health. The instrument cannot effectively protect human health if the health of millions of workers exposed to chemicals of concern and toxic additives in the production and use of plastic products is left out of the instrument. Direct reference must be made in the text to the **ILO fundamental OSH conventions C. 155 on Occupational Safety and Health (1981); C. 187 the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, (2006) as well as C. 170 the Chemicals Convention (1990)**, which provide the internationally agreed standards that ensure the right to a safe and healthy working environment for all workers and have already been agreed internationally through a tripartite process involving states, workers' and employers' organisations the social partners.

Third, countries need a clear, mandatory framework to refer to as they deal with a massive social transition. However, the text under **Article 10 on Just Transition** has now become a purely optional, voluntary, cherry-picking exercise, whereas the inclusion of **a legally binding provision on just transition** is not only a common demand of the global labour movement; it is **a legal requirement stemming from the international normative package into which this treaty must be integrated**. The current text falls short of the commitments already made by States at the International Labour Organisation (ILO), at the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and at the Paris Agreement. Under all these instruments, just transition is recognised not as an abstract aspiration, but as a substantive obligation linked to the respect for fundamental labour rights.

Moreover, the recent advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice on States' climate obligations has reinforced a fundamental legal principle: international treaties must be interpreted and applied as part of an integrated and coherent normative system, not in isolation. Any new instrument adopted within the UN framework must be in conformity with standards already established in other areas of international law, including international labour law.

Omitting and neglecting labour and social commitments in a treaty that regulates a massive industrial transformation of global scope, such as the reconversion of the plastics economy, constitutes a clear breach of the normative coherence required by the multilateral system.

The global labour movement reiterates our concrete proposals on **Just Transition**:

1. **Article 10** be reformulated as **legally binding**, establishing that each Party must present a **National Just Transition Plan (NTPJ)**, elaborated with the **effective participation of the social partners** (workers' and employers' organisations), in accordance with the principles of tripartite social dialogue promoted by the ILO.
2. That a **Multilateral Just Transition Fund** be established to finance this transition, with mandatory contributions from the plastics industry and differentiated contributions from developed States, in application of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.
3. That **trade union organisations be institutionally incorporated into the governance of the treaty**, both at national and international level, including their participation in the monitoring, technical review and standard-setting committees.
4. The inclusion of **mandatory social indicators** to monitor the transition in terms of decent work creation, reduction of informality, strengthening of OSH and social protection coverage.
5. Agreed measures must be linked to **plans for productive and employment reconversion**, guaranteeing that the processes of industrial and technological substitution do not lead to the loss of employment, labour rights or social exclusion.
6. That **explicit recognition be given to all workers throughout the full life cycle of plastics**, in all forms of employment, in the formal and informal economy, ensuring that their rights are protected in accordance with the ILO Core Conventions.
7. That the treaty includes **explicit references to social dialogue, workers' organisations, social partners and collective bargaining** as institutional pillars for the implementation of just transition, as required by the current international normative framework.

Non-compliance with these principles is not a neutral option. It is a legal regression of international law and a weakening of rules-based multilateralism. If the transition does not incorporate the international labour commitments already made, the treaty risks being not only socially regressive, but legally inconsistent and ultimately ineffective. We therefore ask that this final round of negotiations corrects this omission and consolidates a legal instrument that is up to the international normative system of which it should be a part.

Finally, under **Article 8 on plastic waste management** we need **public investment** – including that raised through fair corporate taxation as per the implementation of the polluter's pay principle – **to (re)build adequate waste management infrastructures and water and sanitation facilities** that are safe for users, workers and the environment, so we can safely drink water off the tap we do not need plastic bottles to carry it. Effective waste management services can only work if there is proper investment in social infrastructure and with decent conditions for the workforce that operate those utilities, which have to be ran on a public good basis, not for profit.

We are available to provide our expertise to negotiators on these key topics and we remain available to provide further input all along the INC process.

Thank you for your attention.