



To: Ambassador Vayas Valdivieso and Members of the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) on Plastic Pollution

Cc: INC Secretariat, Jyoti Mathur-Filipp

Geneva, 7 August 2025

Subject: Concerns Regarding Observer Participation and Transparency in INC-5.2

Dear Ambassador Vayas Valdivieso and Members of the Bureau:

We are writing on behalf of the International Pollutants Elimination Network (IPEN), which is currently attending INC-5.2 in Geneva with about 60 representatives from nearly 30 countries. We want to express our serious concern over the increasing restrictions on observer participation, especially the decision to hold informal meetings that are closed to observers.

While we acknowledge that some closed meetings might be necessary to make progress toward compromise, such arrangements should not compromise the transparency or integrity of the process. They also should not prevent the participation of scientists and experts from intergovernmental organizations, whose expertise many Member States depend on during negotiations.

We respectfully remind the Bureau that the mandate from UNEA Resolution 5/14 emphasizes the **“widest and most effective participation possible.”** In light of this, we urge you to take immediate steps to ensure that informal meetings remain open or that any decision to close such meetings is **clearly justified, narrowly interpreted**, and communicated transparently. This approach of closing informal meetings differs from other UNEP negotiations, such as the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions Conferences of the Parties, the Minamata Convention COPs, and the United Nations Environmental Assembly, where observers are seldom excluded from informal sessions.

Furthermore, we note with growing concern that:

- **Observer space is already severely limited.** With over 1,200 observers registered on-site, seating is restricted to approximately **60 seats per contact group room**, often leaving hundreds of observers excluded from both contact groups and plenary sessions and relegated to overflow rooms with only access to the audio of the meeting.
- In the contact group rooms, the limited number of seats are being flooded by industry lobbyists, dominating and occupying observer seats, further constricting the number of seats for scientists and other civil society representatives.
- Daily schedules shared on the INC live daily schedule webpage and Mobile App discourage observers from participating by marking them as closed, even though each region has its own rules regarding observer participation.



- **Observers are not given microphones**, making it impossible to provide comments during negotiations even when they are present. This goes against the principles of meaningful participation and weakens the role that observers serve in offering technical expertise and representing affected communities.
- **We are observers, not spectators.** Participation needs to go beyond symbolism — it must be **effective, meaningful, and timely**, in accordance with Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration and other internationally recognized standards on access to information and participation in environmental decision-making.

As outlined in [the enclosed briefing from IPEN](#), **meaningful participation** is essential to the legitimacy, transparency, and effectiveness of the treaty process. Civil society brings critical perspectives, including independent scientific analysis, lived experience, and on-the-ground knowledge — particularly from the Global South and vulnerable communities most affected by plastic pollution and hazardous chemicals.

We call on the President and Bureau to:

1. **Commit that informal meetings are open to observers as a default**, unless a clear and reasonable justification is made available.
2. **Address the limitations in physical space** by ensuring that bigger rooms are available for observers' access.
3. **Enable the right to make observations** on text proposals by providing at least one microphone to observers in all meetings where negotiations occur.
4. **Uphold the commitment to transparency** in all stages of the negotiation process.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and remain ready to constructively engage in the treaty process, with the shared goal of achieving an ambitious and health-protective Plastics Treaty.

Sincerely,

IPEN Co-chairs

Pamela Miller and Yuyun Ismawati

The IPEN Delegation

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