



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY PRESIDENT
WILLIAM RUTO, PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER-
IN-CHIEF OF THE KENYA DEFENCE FORCES
DURING THE OPENING OF THE THIRD SESSION
OF THE INTER-GOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATING
COMMITTEE ON ENDING PLASTIC POLLUTION**

NOVEMBER 13TH, 2023

UNITED NATIONS OFFICE, NAIROBI

Executive Director of UNEP,

**Executive Secretary of the Inter-Governmental
Negotiating Committee,**

**Distinguished Chair of the Inter-Governmental
Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution,
Ambassador Meza Cuadra,**

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Distinguished Delegates,

1. It is not always common for the globe to speak in unison or act in urgency on an issue, especially when it is of an environmental nature. But the threat of plastics to our planet, our health and our future is of such a magnitude that it requires all of us, the Global South and the Global North to develop and execute a global instrument that will help us to neutralise the threat of plastic pollution in our world.
2. The numbers on plastic pollution explain the necessity of working together and with tremendous purpose and urgency. Every year, more than 400 million tonnes of plastic waste are produced globally. Of these, 23 million tonnes find their way into rivers, lakes and oceans, and less than 10 per cent is recycled. Across the world, 46 per cent of plastic waste is landfilled, 22 per cent is mismanaged and becomes litter, while 17 per cent is incinerated. If we hold our laurels and do nothing, we will produce more than a billion tonnes of plastic by 2060. This kind of polluting our environment is unacceptable and is essentially an existential threat to life, human and otherwise, on Earth. This



is the time to stop this and you are the negotiators who will make it happen.

3. On behalf of the government and people of Kenya, I welcome all of you to our country and to this integral session of the Inter-Governmental Negotiating Committee. Kenya is delighted to host this session particularly because it was here in Nairobi that humanity spoke in one voice at the United Nations Environmental Assembly 5.2 when 170 nations agreed to launch negotiations towards a globally binding instrument.

4. The scope of the instrument was supposed to clearly reflect the requirement of Resolution 5/14 of the United Nations Environment Assembly, including ending plastic pollution across the full life cycle of all plastics and addressing its effects on human health and the environment, and especially the marine environment. The Committee was tasked to draft:
 - i) A global instrument that promotes sustainable product design and eliminates the most harmful and high-risk plastic categories, including problematic polymers, chemicals of concern, products and applications, and brings overall plastic production to sustainable levels.

 - ii) Ensures the need to enshrine sustainable production and consumption patterns and environmentally sound management of plastic waste, which also addresses existing plastic pollution.



- iii) Support the application of the Rio Principles, including the polluter pays and precautionary principles, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and emphasises the importance of operationalizing those principles throughout the provisions of the instrument.
5. I want to commend the Committee for the work you have already accomplished in your first and second sessions. I believe I speak for many across the world when I say I am encouraged and confident that you will deliver a global instrument on time and lead a monumental shift in our relationship with the planet and with each other.
 6. The global community is waiting with great anticipation for the instrument that you will develop to chart a global plan for tackling plastic pollution. This anticipation is heightened by the zero draft, and it is the shared belief of many that this third session presents an opportunity for you, distinguished delegates, to convert the draft into a plan.
 7. The zero draft serves as a rallying call for Global collective action for our planet through various interventions such as the reduction of plastics produced, elimination of problematic and short-lived plastics, investment in solid waste management policies and a Just Transition by integrating workers, especially in the informal settings, to ensure that no one is left behind in the shift from a linear to a circular model of plastic life cycle management.



8. The ambition of the zero-draft is a welcome signal that the world is one step closer to ending plastic pollution, one of the biggest contributors to the Triple Planetary Crises. I commend the committee for your inclusive approach and incorporating the views of diverse stakeholders. This draft is a product of true environmental multi-lateralism.

9. I would like to affirm Kenya's commitment to ending plastic pollution. We demonstrated this commitment with the ban on the manufacture and use of polythene bags in 2017, followed closely in 2020 with a ban on single-use plastics in protected areas such as national parks, forests and beaches. Further in July 2022, Kenya enacted the Sustainable Waste Management Act which made our country the first in the world to subject all products, including plastics, to Extended Producer Responsibility. We know this is not enough and we are ready to play our part in the elimination of plastic pollution. Nobel Laureate Wangari Maathai, a daughter of our own soil, taught us the principle of the hummingbird, which is essentially beginning to do the work, bit by bit until it is done.

10. I thank the African Ministerial Conference on Environment for proposing that the UNEP headquarters in Nairobi be the host of the Secretariat for the Plastics Convention. The chairman of Inter-Governmental Negotiating Committee in the Synthesis Paper to be considered at this meeting has also seconded this idea. I humbly ask member States to support this proposal to host the Secretariat at UNEP headquarters here in Nairobi. This will strengthen UNEP, one of the few United Nations agencies headquartered in the Global South.



11. Dealing with plastics pollution is central to making progress on climate change. Plastics could account for up to 19 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions allowed under a 1.5°C by 2040. It is now time for investors, multinational corporations and technology companies to shift strategic investments to reduce their plastics waste footprint.

12. We call upon producers and innovators to rethink plastic products and packaging to reflect the principles of reuse, refill, repair and repurpose by exploring alternative options such as non-plastic substitutes, alternative plastics and plastic products that do not have negative environmental, health and social impacts. I invite innovators to come and invest in Africa because the continent has natural resources that can be used for planet-friendly alternatives. This is an opportunity for African plastic-alternative industries to become market leaders and drive economic growth and transformation on our continent.

13. Innovation has moved humanity forward for centuries, helping people overcome numerous threats and challenges. The elimination of plastic pollution is a threat that demands innovation. This is the reality and challenge that industry and private sector must accept and look for opportunities in other alternatives. The world is need of alternatives and ways of making plastics circular. This calls for investments in mechanisms to make technology transfer and transformation easy and possible.



14. As we begin this third session of the Inter-Governmental Negotiating Committee, I urge all the negotiators to recall that 2024 is only six weeks away and only two other meetings to go. I reiterate my confidence in your ability to get this done, to repay the faith humanity has placed on you to deliver this moment in history, to chart a path forward for the planet and people against one of the biggest threats we have ever faced.
15. To deal with plastic pollution, humanity must change. We must change the way we consume, the way we produce and how we dispose our waste. This is the reality of our world. Change is inevitable. This treaty, this instrument that we are working on, is the first domino in this change. Let us bring it home. Let the change begin.

Thank you.

God Bless you.

