

118TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# S. RES. 893

Expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution's development of an international binding agreement, which is expected to be completed at its Fifth Session in Busan, Republic of Korea in December 2024.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

NOVEMBER 13, 2024

Mr. CARDIN submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the  
Committee on Foreign Relations

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## RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution's development of an international binding agreement, which is expected to be completed at its Fifth Session in Busan, Republic of Korea in December 2024.

Whereas the production of plastic polymers releases pollutants that degrade air quality, water quality, and soil health and contribute to increased health and environmental risks to nearby communities, biodiversity, and the wider environment;

Whereas the chemical makeup of plastics mostly consists of extracted hydrocarbons and synthetic chemicals that are processed to form polymers, which enables plastic mate-

rials to be easily molded and shaped when heat and pressure is applied;

Whereas plastic materials and products have unique, versatile, and convenient applications, but plastic polymers, chemicals, and waste products are extremely harmful when leaked into the natural environment, including marine environments;

Whereas discarded plastic waste materials, particularly plastic products designed or applied as single-use or disposable, which are most commonly used in packaging, utensils, flatware, beverage and other liquid containers, and plastic film, are ubiquitous and are products that comprise the highest volumes of plastic pollution in the environment;

Whereas plastic pollution occurs when—

(1) plastic is deposited intentionally or unintentionally into the environment;

(2) plastic particles are shed from plastic products during production or use;

(3) plastic fibers are released during the routine washing of synthetic textiles;

(4) waste and discarded plastic products escape from waste management streams and wastewater treatment systems;

(5) plastic is mishandled or is littered into the environment; and

(6) there is inadequate mitigation and management of emissions, polymers, and byproducts from plastic chemical refining, manufacturing, and transport processes;

Whereas less than 9 percent of plastics discarded in the United States is recycled;

Whereas, according to the United Nations Environment Programme, 430,000,000 metric tons of plastic are produced annually worldwide;

Whereas plastic breaks down into microplastics that—

- (1) become ubiquitous in the environment;
- (2) are easily ingestible by marine life where plastic enters the food web;
- (3) are increasingly found in ambient air, drinking water supplies, food crops, and animal proteins;
- (4) can persist for centuries; and
- (5) can be inhaled or ingested by humans;

Whereas the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals estimate that between 19,000,000 and 23,000,000 tons of plastic annually leaks into aquatic ecosystems, such as lakes, rivers, and seas;

Whereas a 2021 National Academies of Sciences study found that the United States annually contributes between 1,000,000 and 2,000,000 metric tons of plastic pollution into the environment;

Whereas abandoned, lost, or otherwise discarded fishing gear (also known as 'ghost gear') is a deadly form of pollution to marine species in our ocean, and is often made of plastics;

Whereas plastic pollutants, including microplastics, pose significant threat to human health, including fetal development, endocrine disruption, liver and kidney disease, and brain and neural development, through—

- (1) inhalation, dermal exposure, and ingestion of contaminated food or beverages; and
- (2) the use of degrading plastic containers, utensils, and flatware;

Whereas inland waterways and coastal communities that are dependent on healthy fisheries, safe and hazard free maritime channels, tourism, secure property values, and safe recreation, are negatively affected by plastic pollution and marine debris, which impairs economic growth and economic opportunity;

Whereas achieving circularity in the full lifecycle of polymer production, plastic product manufacturing, and the handling, processing, recycling, and disposal of post-consumer plastic waste through sustainable recycling processes in which plastic materials are manufactured to be durable, repairable, reusable and fully and safely recyclable, would significantly reduce the negative impacts of plastic;

Whereas the accumulation of marine debris and plastic pollution in the oceans—

- (1) are navigational hazards;
- (2) cause significant damage to vessels; and
- (3) disrupt maritime transportation;

Whereas least developed countries face considerable waste management capacity constraints due, in part, to exports of plastic and plastic waste from other countries, inadequate infrastructure, collection costs, and the lack of a responsible end-market for recovered and recycled plastics, all of which weaken such countries' ability to responsibly manage plastic waste;

Whereas existing plastic substitutes, such as bamboo, natural fibers, aluminum, paper, and wax, could cut plastic waste by 17 percent by 2040;

Whereas 96 countries have enacted more than 225 national laws to address plastic pollution and marine debris;

Whereas in 2023, the United States Agency for International Development estimated that its Save Our Seas initiative has prevented the equivalent of nearly 8,000,000,000 plastic bottles (or more than 73,500 metric tons) from polluting the environment through its work in Peru, the Dominican Republic, Kenya, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, the Philippines, Fiji, Micronesia, and Papua New Guinea;

Whereas several States and municipalities in the United States have imposed a variety of localized measures to curb single-use plastics, including—

- (1) bans or taxes on single-use shopping bags;
- (2) bans on plastic straws and plastic utensils provided at restaurants and grocery stores;
- (3) restrictions on the use of non-recyclable plastic in single-use applications;
- (4) support for reusable infrastructure, such as dine-in establishments or water-refill stations;
- (5) zero-waste targets and plans, including reduction requirements for single-use plastics;
- (6) requirements for plastic product redesign, including for reuse and recycling; and
- (7) extended producer responsibility requirements for producers of single-use plastics;

Whereas best available science, including the latest modeling, points to plastic reduction, is essential to ending plastic pollution;

Whereas the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution, operating under the framework of the United Nations Environment Programme and tasked with developing an international legally binding instru-

ment on plastic pollution, consists of several groups of countries, including—

(1) the High Ambition Coalition to End Plastic Production, which is a group of 65 countries, co-chaired by Norway and Rwanda, which supports an agreement aimed at ending plastic pollution by 2040 by—

(A) restraining global plastic consumption and production;

(B) developing a circular economy for plastics that protects the environment and human’s health; and

(C) environmentally sound management and recycling of plastic waste; and

(2) the Like-Minded Countries Group, led by Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iran, and other oil producing countries, which supports a more limited agreement focusing on—

(A) improvements to recycling and waste management systems; and

(B) allowing countries to determine their own targets for plastic pollution reduction;

Whereas the draft agreement text proposes articles addressing the full lifecycle of plastics, including microplastics and nanoplastics, and extended producer responsibility;

Whereas the United States submission at the Fourth Session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution called for an agreement that—

(A) addresses plastic’s harm to human health and the environment, including marine environment;

(B) incrementally reduces the demand for plastics;

(C) creates environmentally sound waste management practices;

(D) supports research into alternative plastic products and plastic substitutes; and

(E) establishes an international governing body;

Whereas the Parties have considerable work to do before reaching an agreement on comprehensive and impactful provisions that address—

(1) the lifecycle of plastic pollution;

(2) the effects of plastic pollution on human health, particularly vulnerable communities proximate to the sources of plastic pollution; and

(3) the development of science-based targets and timelines for ending plastic pollution;

Whereas the United States has a responsibility to play an important leadership role in the negotiations to convene parties and build consensus towards an effective new binding international agreement regarding plastic pollution; and

Whereas the Fifth Session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution will focus on refining and seeking consensus on the text for the adoption of a new comprehensive internationally legally binding agreement to address plastic pollution:

Now, therefore, be it

1       *Resolved*, That it is the sense of the Senate that the

2 United States must—

3           (1) work towards the achievement of a new

4 international agreement to address plastic pollution

5 that—

1 (A) protects human health and the envi-  
2 ronment; and

3 (B) mitigates the risks plastic pollution  
4 has on global economic activity and public safe-  
5 ty;

6 (2) continue to play a critical leadership role in  
7 developing an ambitious international agreement  
8 that seeks to end plastic pollution consistent with  
9 United Nations Resolution 5/14;

10 (3) advance outcomes and objectives in the ne-  
11 gotiations that clearly support the economic, diplo-  
12 matic, technological advantage, public health, safety,  
13 and security interests of the United States;

14 (4) seek to build consensus among stakeholders,  
15 while encouraging civil society representatives, labor,  
16 scientific subject matter experts, and impacted com-  
17 mercial and industrial sectors to cooperate towards  
18 achieving the most ambitious agreement possible  
19 with respect to reducing plastic pollution;

20 (5) help convene and facilitate, whenever appro-  
21 priate, discussions within the Intergovernmental Ne-  
22 gotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution to bring  
23 the international community towards a unified and  
24 comprehensive international agreement;



1           (6) oppose certain parties’ efforts to delay  
2 progress towards such an agreement;

3           (7) ensure that all countries realize a shared re-  
4 sponsibility to address global plastic pollution;

5           (8) consider pursuing an initial agreement that  
6 takes a “Start and Strengthen” approach to ad-  
7 dressing plastic pollution by identifying critical poli-  
8 cy areas for phasing down and phasing out plastic  
9 pollution, with the clear intention to strengthen and  
10 increase the ambition of the agreement over time;

11          (9) work to ensure that the obligations, goals,  
12 targets, and preferred approaches described in the  
13 final agreement to reduce plastic pollution are sup-  
14 ported by the best available science, which should  
15 also determine the scope and scale of global plastic  
16 pollution that the agreement will aim to solve;

17          (10) insist that the new binding international  
18 agreement applies obligations to all parties and pro-  
19 vides parties sufficient flexibility to determine their  
20 own policies and measures to address their contribu-  
21 tions of plastic pollution, including microplastics,  
22 into the environment;

23          (11) work to ensure that the financial mecha-  
24 nism has an expanded donor base that—

25               (A) reflects current economic realities; and

1           (B) prioritizes support for countries with  
2           limited technical and financial capacity to im-  
3           plement the agreement; and

4           (12) prioritize the inclusion of strong trans-  
5           parency and accountability procedures and mecha-  
6           nisms that will ensure the effectiveness of actions  
7           taken by each party to the agreement.

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