



A JUST PLASTICS TREATY: BY COMMUNITIES, FOR COMMUNITIES –

SUPPLY CUTS, FAIR FINANCE, SHARED TECHNOLOGY, LOCAL POWER

Policy Proposal | July 2025

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That is why this treaty language proposal is designed by communities, for communities — to anchor ocean justice and build a truly sustainable blue economy that protects life, jobs, and cultures alike.”

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Introduction: The Promise of the Ocean and the Threat of Plastics

People-powered Policy Solutions

For centuries, ocean communities — coastal villages, small island states, Indigenous Peoples, artisanal fishers — have cared for the sea and drawn life from it. Today, they face a paradox: while the ocean economy holds vast potential for sustainable growth, **the same extractive systems that generate plastic pollution threaten to choke that promise at its source.**

The OECD's The Ocean Economy to 2050 (2025) shows that ocean-based industries could more than double in value in the next 25 years if managed sustainably — but warns that rising plastic pollution, climate impacts, and unchecked industrial expansion put that future at risk. The new data echo the OECD's Global Plastics Outlook (2022): the world cannot manage ballooning plastic flows with downstream waste fixes alone.

Research by Azul, IUCN, and the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) supports what ocean communities have long argued — that the plastic lifecycle is a threat to our climate, human rights, and biodiversity. **Tackling plastic pollution upstream is the clearest way to protect the ocean's wealth while securing livelihoods, cultural ties, and the blue economies that coastal people depend on.**



As stated in the UN Environment Program/Azul report, *Neglected: Environmental Justice Impacts of Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution (2021)*: “Plastic pollution impacts our marine environment and human communities. Particularly, vulnerable communities disproportionately bear the consequences of environmental degradation caused by plastics pollution from production to waste.”

Centering environmental justice ensures that frontline coastal communities, who often bear the brunt of plastic pollution’s impacts, are key partners in creating solutions that protect both people and the planet.

2024 National Azul Poll

Latino voters want bold policy action to fight plastics

The **2024 National Azul Poll: Latinos and the Ocean** is the second-ever nationwide poll on Latino viewpoints on ocean protection, policies and recreation. The latest poll dives deeper into critical issues affecting our ocean and communities, offering new insights into voter priorities and policy solutions.

Latino communities are not a monolith, but the results are clear: Latino voters want governments to take bold action on plastics, and they are willing to pay more out of their own pocket to advance ocean justice. The findings from the 2024 National Azul Poll show:

Latino voters **support holding plastic manufacturers accountable**, and want to see a **Global Plastics Treaty**, even if it means the U.S. may have to follow difficult and expensive rules.

- **73%** of Latino voters **support a ban on the use of single-use plastic products** (such as straws, forks, cups, and packaging) even if it means having less convenient options
- **77%** of Latino voters **support holding plastics manufacturers legally and financially accountable** for plastics pollution caused by their products
- **75%** of Latino voters **support creating a legally binding international treaty** that aims to end plastic pollution, even if it means the U.S. may have to follow difficult and expensive rules
- **76%** of Latino voters **favor regulating the use and types of chemicals in plastic**. The production of plastic products often involves the use of toxic chemicals, many of which remain in the plastic product and pass into the environment when the plastic becomes waste and pollution.
- **88%** of Latino voters **agree plastic products are a threat** to the health of the environment, especially to the ocean
- **88%** of Latino voters **agree we must do more** to prevent plastic pollution
- **85%** of Latino voters **agree plastic pollution will get worse** if the government does not do something to prevent it

Article 6 — Cutting Plastics at the Source Reduce Supply, Protect People and Nature

At the heart of Azul’s community-driven package is Article 6, which demands action where it matters most: production. It sets a **binding commitment** to cut primary plastic polymer production by at least 40% by 2035, aiming for near-elimination by 2040.

This goal is grounded in the **precautionary principle**, first recognized in the Rio Declaration and reaffirmed by countless environmental and legal experts, from the IPCC to recent analyses by CIEL showing that new petrochemical buildout locks communities into toxic exposure and climate risks for decades.

Communities on the frontlines of production know what unchecked expansion means: pipeline spills, flares, and toxic air. Article 6 stops the cycle by requiring clear **National Production Reduction Plans**, bans on new virgin polymer capacity, and **Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs)** designed with free, prior, and informed consent for Indigenous Peoples and the full participation of frontline neighborhoods.

As the OECD’s Ocean Economy to 2050 report points out, industries that fail to address their upstream footprints will face mounting costs and lose social license — making supply cuts a sound economic decision as well as an ecological necessity.

Article 11 — Fair Finance for All Cut Inefficient Schemes, Fund Real Solutions

Communities cannot shoulder this transformation alone. Article 11 sets up a **Plastics Elimination Fund**, designed to channel money from those who profited most into those who protect the ocean daily.

Mandatory contributions from developed nations and a levy on global polymer producers would ensure funding aligns with historic responsibility and current impact — echoing the OECD’s call for applying the polluter-pays principle to ocean industries as a baseline for sustainable growth.

Unlike older, donor-driven models, **this fund is structured by communities, for communities:**

- 20% minimum to Indigenous Peoples, small islands, and frontline neighborhoods.
- 10% minimum to women-led and youth-led initiatives.
- 10% minimum to capacity building, including waste picker organizing, zero-waste systems, and coastal monitoring.

No funding would support incineration, chemical “recycling,” or other false solutions that CIEL’s 2023 findings flag as major new pollution risks. A transparent digital portal and an independent grievance body ensure that communities can track, question, and shape how money flows.

Article 12 — Technology That Serves, Not Harms

Tech Without Strings, Justice Without Delay

Communities everywhere have homegrown solutions — reuse and refill, community composting, and regenerative packaging. But technology pathways are too often captured by patents, corporations, or national interests far removed from coastal realities.

Article 12 breaks that barrier. It obligates developed states to lift IP obstacles where they block environmental action. A **Social and Ocean Justice Technology Panel**, with strong community and Indigenous leadership, would vet technologies for real-world safety and fairness — echoing the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and community-led models celebrated by IUCN and peer-reviewed scholars like Cicin-Sain & Knecht (1998).

A **Technology Access Platform** would ensure communities can share best practices directly, not just depend on top-down “transfers” that too often arrive late or come with strings attached.

Article 13 — Building Local Power

Skip Paper Promises, Boost Local Power

Good policy on paper is nothing without people to carry it forward. Communities need power and resources to shape the solutions that protect their coastlines. Article 13 guarantees that at least 10% of the **Plastics Elimination Fund** supports on-the-ground capacity building: waste picker cooperatives, Indigenous guardianship, local councils, youth networks, and coastal municipalities.

It builds on real-world blue economy best practices: from Palau’s community-based MPAs, to New Zealand’s co-governance under the Treaty of Waitangi, to Costa Rica’s constitutional right to a healthy environment. These models show that when communities lead, ecosystems rebound and ocean-dependent jobs grow stronger. The OECD’s 2050 ocean forecast confirms that inclusive governance is not just fair — it’s smart economic policy.



Conclusion: A Living Story — By Communities, for Communities

The science is clear: **we cannot recycle our way out of the plastics crisis.** The OECD, IUCN, and the IPCC all point in the same direction: tackling supply is non-negotiable if we want healthy seas and resilient coastal economies.

These words — supply cuts, funds, panels, plans — mean nothing if they do not include the people who know the ocean best and who defend it every day. That is why this treaty language proposal is designed by communities, for communities — to anchor ocean justice and build a truly sustainable blue economy that protects life, jobs, and cultures alike.

It is a chance to rewrite the rules so that those living closest to the sea shape how the ocean economy grows, how plastic flows shrink, and how the promises of sustainability finally reach the shore.

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