



INC5.2

Youth Love Egypt Foundation (YLE) participation in INC-5.2, providing on-the-ground coverage and updates from Geneva.

5–15 August 2025 | Geneva, Switzerland

»»» INC-5.2 Overview «««

“Expectations, Challenges, and a Missed Agreement”



OVERVIEW AND OUTCOMES OF INC-5.2



The resumed fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution (INC-5.2) was held in Geneva from 5–15 August 2025. The session was expected to finalize a legally binding global treaty addressing the full life cycle of plastics, from production to waste management. However, after nearly two weeks of intense negotiations, delegates failed to reach consensus, and the session concluded without adopting a final text.

Key contentious issues included:

- **Virgin plastic production:** Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and African countries pushed for binding caps on new plastic production, while major petrochemical producers opposed such limits, advocating instead for downstream measures such as recycling and waste management.



OVERVIEW AND OUTCOMES OF INC-5.2



- **Financing:** Developing countries demanded a new dedicated and mandatory fund to support implementation, whereas developed nations preferred voluntary or hybrid financial mechanisms based on existing structures.
- **Technology transfer and capacity building:** Disagreements centered on whether commitments should be voluntary or binding, with calls from developing nations for more equitable and enforceable provisions.
- **Hazardous chemicals:** Negotiators clashed over how to regulate toxic additives in plastics that pose risks to both human health and ecosystems.

Despite the collapse of the talks and rejection of multiple draft texts, INC-5.2 clarified the map of disagreements and highlighted areas of emerging convergence. These included phasing out the most problematic plastic products, advancing sustainable product design, and expanding Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes.

The failure of Geneva represents the second missed opportunity after Busan (December 2024) and raises critical questions about the next steps: whether negotiations will resume under an INC-5.3 session or escalate to UNEA-7.



OVERVIEW AND OUTCOMES OF INC-5.2



Nevertheless, INC-5.2 underscored the urgency of political will to complement technical negotiations. Civil society and youth organizations, including the Youth Loves Egypt Foundation (YLE), strongly emphasized that the treaty must be:

- Legally binding with strong compliance mechanisms.
- Inclusive, ensuring the participation of civil society and developing countries.
- Equipped with fair financing and technology transfer systems.
- Free from undue influence of vested industrial interests.
- While the outcome was a setback, INC-5.2 also reaffirmed a growing global consensus: a comprehensive and enforceable plastics treaty remains the most effective path to tackling the “plastic tsunami” threatening our oceans, health, and future generations.

➤➤➤ Negotiation History <<<

“Background, Acronyms, and YLE’s Role at INC-5.2”



WHAT IS INC?

The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) was established by the United Nations Environment Assembly to develop an international legally binding instrument (ILBI) to end plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. The resumed fifth session (INC-5.2), taking place in Geneva from 5–14 August 2025, marks a critical moment in the negotiations, as delegates aim to finalize the terms of the treaty.



UNITED NATIONS

NATIONS UNIES

OBJECTIVE OF INC 5.2

The objective is to create a comprehensive agreement that addresses the full life cycle of plastic—from design and production to use and disposal. Key issues on the table include potential caps on primary plastic production, the regulation of hazardous chemicals in plastic products, and equitable, effective financing mechanisms. The importance of these negotiations lies in their potential to shape a future global framework capable of reversing the plastic pollution crisis and promoting environmental justice.





INC BACKGROUND

The INC process was launched in 2022 following a historic resolution adopted at the fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-5.2). The resolution mandated the development of a legally binding treaty to address plastic pollution in all its forms. Since then, five negotiation sessions have been held. The fifth session began in December 2024 in Busan, Republic of Korea, but was suspended before reaching a final agreement due to ongoing disagreements over key provisions.

Delegates agreed to resume the talks in 2025 using a revised Chair's Text as the basis for discussion. Informal intersessional consultations have taken place to help bridge differences and build momentum toward consensus. INC-5.2 is expected to be the final session before the treaty is adopted—making it a pivotal opportunity for the global community to take decisive action against plastic pollution. Humans are at risk when they consume or become entangled in plastic waste.

Key Acronyms for Understanding the INC Negotiations

INC-5.2

Fifth Resumed Session of
the Intergovernmental
Negotiating Committee

ILBI

International
Legally Binding
Instrument

COP

Conference of
the Parties

GEF

Global Environment
Facility

MEAs

Multilateral
Environmental
Agreements

REIOs

Regional Economic
Integration Organizations



YLE's participation in INC-5.2

Youth Love Egypt (YLE) attended INC-5.2 in Geneva as an active observer and field reporter for youth audiences. YLE's activities included monitoring technical contact groups, interviewing civil society and youth delegates, and publishing bilingual daily briefings that explained the implications of key negotiating options. YLE emphasised issues of justice and urged finance mechanisms that support implementation in developing countries.

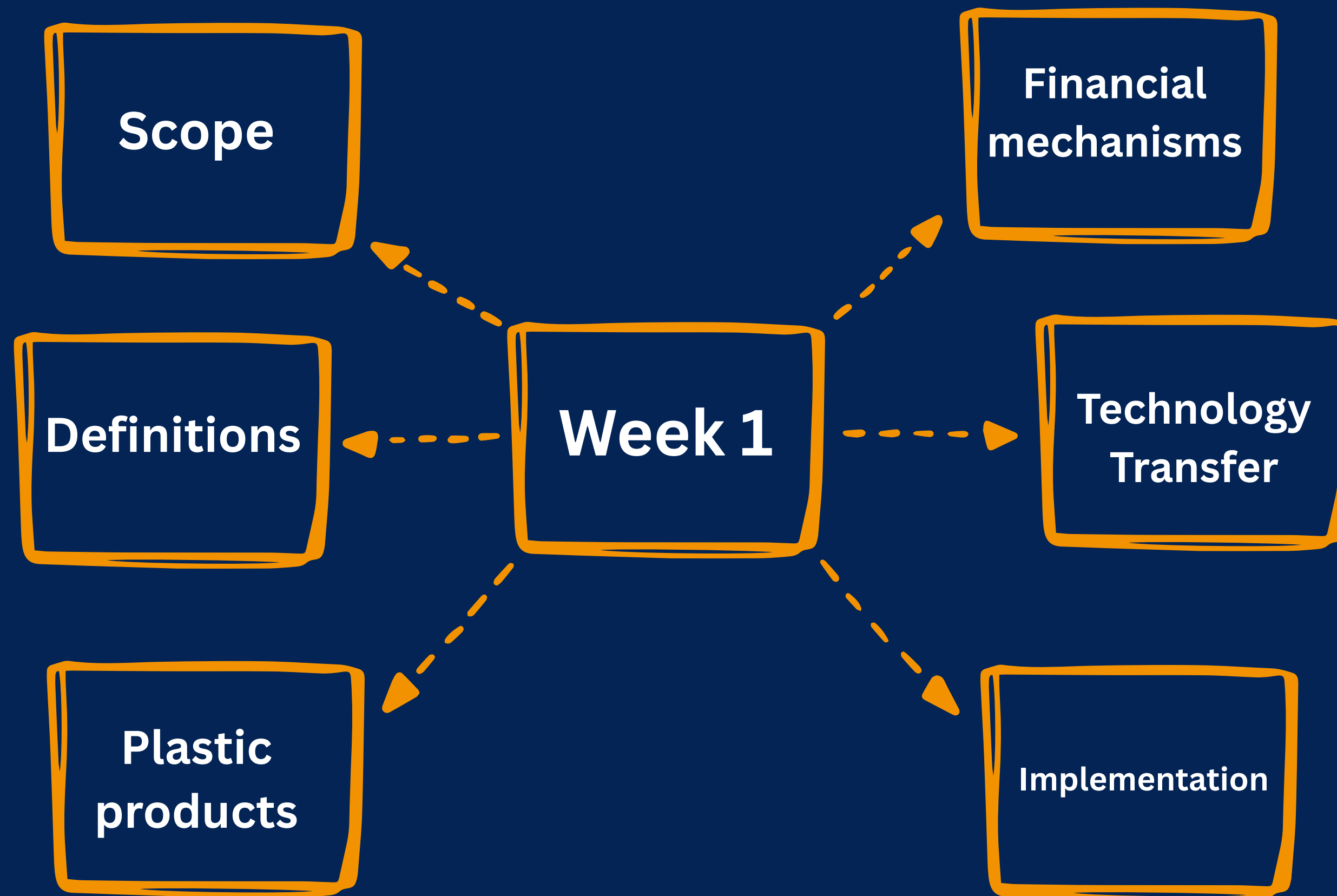




Inside the Negotiations: A Timeline



“From Opening Plenary to Final Deadlock: How the Talks Unfolded”



Day 1- 5 August 2025



The opening plenary combined high-level appeals for urgency and balance: UNEP leaders and many delegations urged negotiators to produce a practical, enforceable instrument while recognizing development and economic sensitivities. After the plenary, delegates split into line-by-line contact groups to begin working on the Chair's Text, signalling a technical and potentially protracted drafting process.



Day 1- 5 August 2025



In the evening, contact groups tackled definitions and scope, product design measures, waste management, and finance. Early divisions became visible: small island states and many developing countries argued for a full life-cycle approach that could include production limits, while oil-producing and some industrial states pushed to emphasize downstream measures such as improved waste management and design standards without binding production caps. This initial split foreshadowed the negotiating pattern for the week

DAY 2 - 6 AUGUST 2025

Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop
an international legally binding instrument on plastic
pollution, including in the marine environment

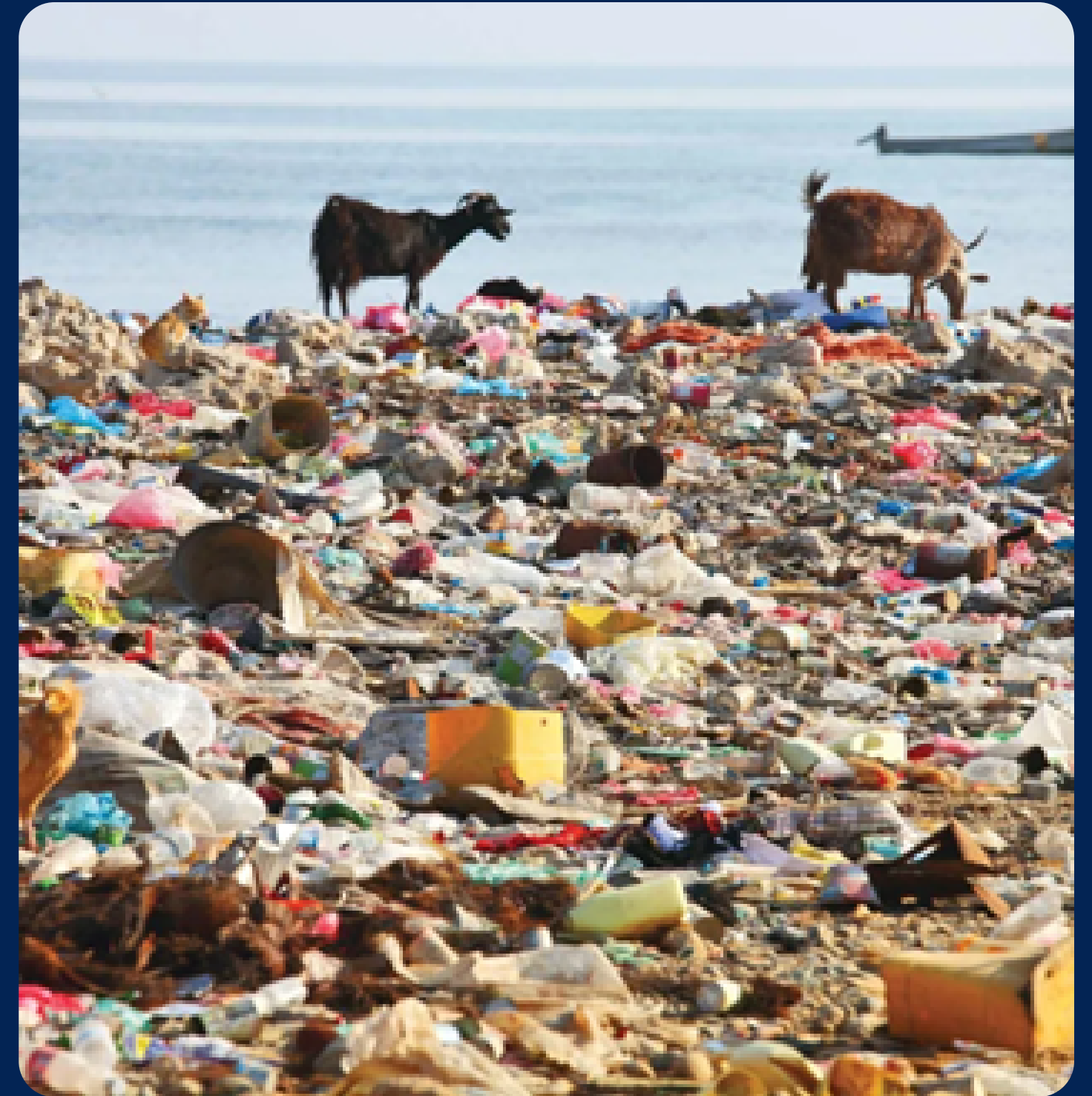


Day two deepened technical debates, especially on product design obligations (reuse, repairability, toxic chemical phase-outs) and on legal definitions that will determine the treaty's reach. Delegations tabled alternative text proposals; what may read as minor linguistic choices (e.g., “shall” vs “should”) carries significant legal consequences for obligation and enforcement. Informal consultations stretched into the evening, centering on finance: whether a dedicated, mandatory fund (financed through mechanisms such as polymer levies or fees) is necessary, or whether hybrid/voluntary approaches will be acceptable. Finance is pivotal — it will determine whether lower-income countries can meet the implementation demands of any ambitious instrument.

Day 3 — 7 August 2025



On day three, negotiators focused intensively on the financial article(s) and on areas where co-facilitators saw potential convergence. Papers comparing text options were used to identify possible technical compromises. While some incremental progress on drafting was reported, political fault lines—especially over production—remained unresolved.



DAY 3 — 7 AUGUST 2025



Informal diplomacy at the margins tested phased or product-specific approaches (target high-risk product categories first), but these options attracted skepticism from delegates who argue piecemeal measures risk diluting the treaty's ambition. Observers also noted the high presence of industry representatives in Geneva, which activists warned could skew outcomes.

Day 4 — 8 August 2025



Contact groups continued refining articles and forwarding texts to legal drafting teams to ensure terminological consistency and legal viability.

coverage helped parties and observers follow the sections with the most brackets — a proxy for contention — and the days were spent whittling down wording where possible.

Debates on phased approaches and lists of priority products gained traction as potential compromises; however, such approaches raise profound questions about whether a final agreement would change global production trajectories or merely improve downstream management. Media coverage and civil society analyses highlighted concerns about petrochemical lobbying presence in Geneva, increasing political pressure around the talks.

Day 5 — 9 August 2025



Delegates conducted a stock-taking plenary to review the assembled text representing the week's drafting; much of that text remained bracketed, indicating that the work ahead is primarily political rather than technical. ENB and other observers concluded the week had clarified the map of disagreement but had not produced binding solutions on the treaty's most contentious items



Day 5 — 9 August 2025



Civil society and youth groups intensified calls for a life-cycle approach and binding finance; simultaneously press reports documented hundreds of petrochemical and fossil fuel lobbyists in Geneva, raising questions about the influence of industry on final outcomes. The dynamic set the stage for crucial informal negotiations and potential political decisions in the subsequent days.



WEEK-ONE

WRAP-UP



Across 5–9 August 2025 the INC-5.2 negotiations combined intense technical drafting with concentrated informal diplomacy. Core unresolved issues were the treaty scope (full life cycle vs downstream focus), treatment of production (binding limits vs voluntary/national measures), finance (new dedicated fund vs hybrid/voluntary mechanisms), and the legal form of technology transfer and capacity building. The week achieved important textual organization and clarified the loci of disagreement, but it did not resolve the political choices that ultimately determine the treaty's ambition. The coming sessions would test whether political will — in the face of strong industry presence and geopolitical divisions — can deliver a legally robust, implementable agreement.



WEEK-ONE WRAP-UP



Youth Love Egypt (YLE) participated on the ground at INC-5.2, monitoring contact groups and publishing accessible updates and analyses aimed at youth and local communities. Ahmed Fathy, YLE's Chair, stressed that the organisation's presence in Geneva builds on its ongoing local and international work — including participation in INC-5.1 in South Korea and hands-on campaigns such as the Marsa Matrouh beach clean-up — and serves to amplify calls for just, implementable solutions.

YLE's engagement underscored two priorities: the need for concrete finance and technology-transfer mechanisms that enable developing countries to implement the treaty, and the importance of meaningful youth participation in environmental decision-making. Together with civil society partners, YLE hopes the second week will yield a balanced and binding text that protects marine and coastal environments and establishes clear pathways to reduce plastic production and its impacts on vulnerable communities.



WEEK 2



The planet urgently needs a global framework to stem the "plastic tsunami" suffocating oceans and poisoning health.

DAY 1 - 11 AUGUST 2025



The first day featured intensive closed-door sessions in contact groups extending late into the night. Contact Group 1 tackled contentious debates on plastic product design (Article 5) and "problematic" plastic products (Article 3), with Saudi Arabia and Brazil clashing over inclusion of the "full plastic life cycle". Contact Group 2 faced divisions on plastic waste management (Article 8) and just transition for workers (Article 10), as some nations resisted binding obligations. Contact Group 3 grappled with financing mechanisms (Article 11), where developing countries' demands for a new dedicated fund collided with developed nations' preference for existing partnerships.

DAY 2- 12 AUGUST 2025



Tensions mounted on Day 2 as core issues stalled negotiations. In Contact Group 1, sustainable production (Article 6) remained a flashpoint; Japan pushed for its deletion while Colombia insisted on linking it to the treaty's scope. Contact Group 3 saw deep rifts over technology transfer (Article 12), particularly on terms like "voluntary" vs. "preferential" and country categorizations (e.g., "coastal African states" or "economies in transition"). Outside the rooms, delegates voiced frustration over "organizational chaos" and scheduling delays, with explicit warnings that the deadlock threatened the conference's success.

Day 3- 13 August 2025



In a dramatic turn, Chair Luis Vayas released a new draft text omitting "scope" and "sustainable production", triggering fierce backlash. Chile, Panama, and the EU publicly condemned it: *"This retreat hollows out the treaty and betrays UNEA Resolution 5/14"*. While China and India backed the proposed path forward, they acknowledged "fundamental gaps" in the text. Most controversially, the presidency abruptly suspended contact groups, sparking confusion about the negotiations' fate and leading some delegations to ask: "Has two weeks of work been erased?".



Day 4 — 14 August 2025



Under severe time pressure, a small working group (15 nations) led by Chile and Japan formed to break the deadlock on four pillars:

- **Plastic production limits**
- **Financing architecture**
- **Plastic product standards**
- **COP voting mechanisms**

After marathon talks, the Chair released a revised text at 12:48 AM, but it failed to resolve core disputes. Pacific SIDS called it "imbalanced", while Saudi Arabia for "Like-Minded Countries" warned it "imposes unacceptable new categorizations". As dawn approached, exhausted delegates expressed doubts about reaching consensus with hours remaining.

Day 5- 15 August 2025



The conference ended in stinging failure at 6:11 AM. Chair Vayas adjourned indefinitely after both texts (Aug 13 & 15) were rejected as "unbalanced". Nigeria captured African outrage: "The text ignores nations most impacted by plastic pollution", while Iran warned: "This is becoming a trade agreement disguised as environmental policy". The EU and Canada pledged to "keep pursuing an ambitious treaty", though acknowledging the path forward had grown far steeper.



»»» WHAT'S NEXT? «««

The collapse of INC-5.2 exposes three structural failures:

1. **Trust Deficit:** Multiple nations accused the Chair of opaque text-drafting and sidelining group outputs.
2. **Geopolitical Rift:** Unbridgeable gaps between plastic-producing economies (Saudi Arabia, Iran, China) and SIDS/African demands for a binding, comprehensive treaty.
3. **Consensus Trap:** Negotiations revealed how UN "consensus" rules may hinder urgent crisis resolution.

Next Challenges:

- **Which Text?:** Disagreement on the basis for talks (Dec 2024 Chair's Text vs. rejected August drafts).
- **Which Path?:** Proposals for INC-5.3 or escalation to UNEA-7.
- **Which Leadership?:** Questions about Chair Vayas' capacity after the trust crisis.

Ultimately: Despite despair, hope remains this failure may shock parties into recalibrating positions. The planet urgently needs a global framework to stem the "plastic tsunami" suffocating oceans and poisoning health.

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THANK YOU

Youth Loves Egypt

