



SINTEF

Governing Plastics

The UN Treaty to End Plastic Pollution & what to expect

Emily Cowan – Research Scientist, SINTEF Ocean

CREDIT: UNEP/ Cyril Villemain

Technology for a better society



Triple Planetary Crisis







SINTEF



2022 UN BIODIVERSITY CONFERENCE

COP 15 - CP/MOP10-NP/MOP4

Ecological Civilization-Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth

KUNMING – MONTRÉAL



Multi-lateral

Multi-lateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs)



SINTEF

UNEA & UNEP

- United Nations Environmental Assembly
 - Established in 2012
 - World's highest-level decision-making body on the environment
- Falls under the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) (est. 1972)
- UNEAs fifth time convening, hence (UNEA5)
 - 2014, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2021-2 (5-5.2)





SINTEF

Mandate

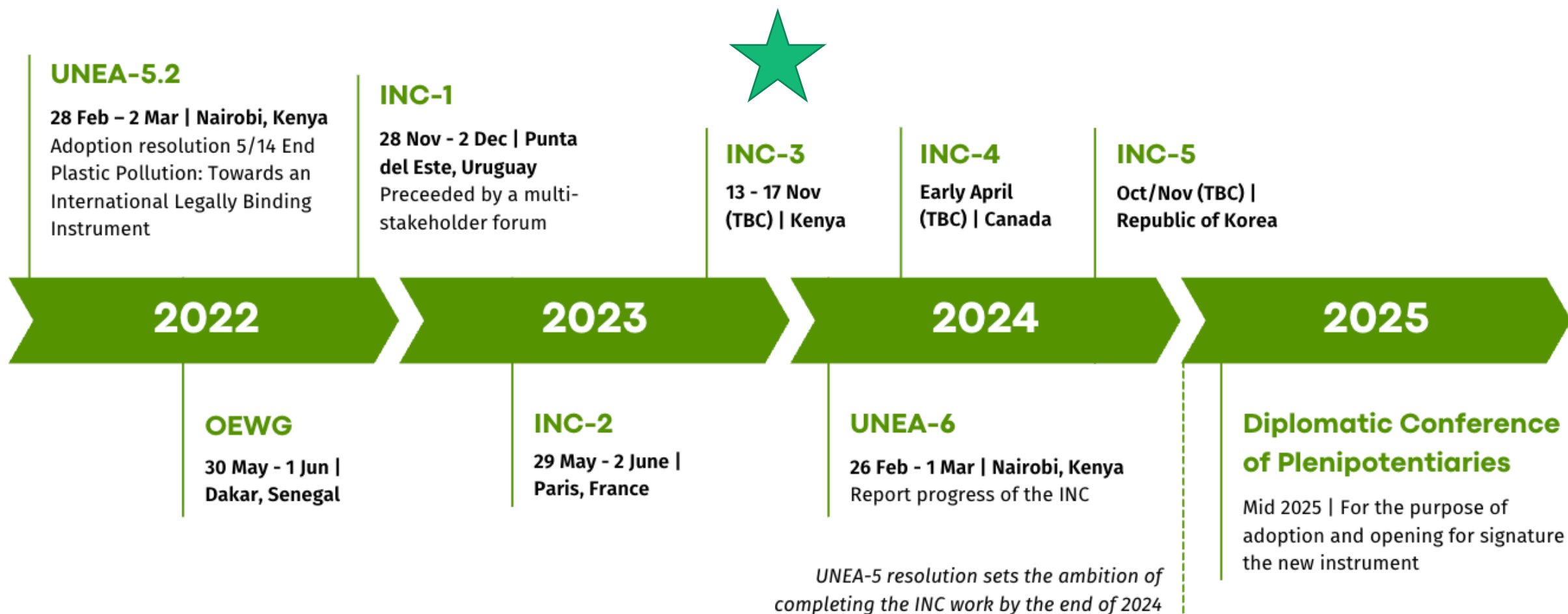
- A resolution entitled *"End plastic pollution: Towards an international legally binding instrument"*
 - [Link](#)
- Need for including science in the decision-making process *'Stressing the urgent need to strengthen the science-policy interface at all levels, improve understanding of the global impact of plastic pollution on the environment, and promote effective and progressive action...'*





SINTEF

Timeline



- 1,700 participants present in Paris
- 700 Member State Delegates
- 169 Member States
- 900 Observers (from NGOs)
- Hosted at UNESCO headquarters in Paris
- INC Chair, Gustavo Meza-Cuadra Velásquez from Peru
- Jyoti Mathur-Filipp, Executive Secretary, Secretariat for the INC



A group of people in business attire are gathered around a table, looking at documents. The scene is dimly lit, with warm lighting. The people are of various ethnicities and are focused on the documents in front of them. Some are pointing at the documents, while others are looking down at them. The background is blurred, showing more people and what appears to be a conference or meeting setting.

Outcomes?

Lack of consensus - delegations were seen to have two points of view:

1. Strict top-down legally binding treaty with enforceable measures (framed as production and environmental problem)
2. National action plans and voluntary measures (framed as waste management problem)



**UNITED
NATIONS**

UNEP/PP/INC.2/4



**United Nations
Environment
Programme**

Distr.: General

13 April 2023

Original: English

**Intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop
an international legally binding instrument on plastic
pollution, including in the marine environment
Second session**

Paris, 29 May–2 June 2023

Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

**Preparation of an international legally binding instrument on
plastic pollution, including in the marine environment**

**Potential options for elements towards an international legally
binding instrument, based on a comprehensive approach that
addresses the full life cycle of plastics as called for by
United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 5/14**

Note by the secretariat



SINTEF

Main Discussions

CONTACT GROUP 1 – OBJECTIVES AND CORE OBLIGATIONS

- Phasing out/reducing supply or demand of primary polymers
- Reducing microplastics (consensus on intentionally added)
- Strengthening waste management
- Design for circularity
- Addressing existing pollution
- Facilitate a just transition and protecting human health and the environment

CONTACT GROUP 2 – MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION, MEASURES, AND ADDITIONAL MATTERS

- Financial assistance
- Technical assistance
- National action plans
- National reporting and compliance
- Period assessment and monitoring of progress
- Research
- Stakeholder integration



SINTEF

FEEDBACK



Technology for a better society

This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC](#)



**UNITED
NATIONS**

UNEP/PP/INC.3/4



**United Nations
Environment
Programme**

Distr.: General
4 September 2023
Original: English

**Intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop
an international legally binding instrument on plastic
pollution, including in the marine environment**

Third session

Nairobi, 13–19 November 2023*

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

**Preparation of an international legally binding instrument on
plastic pollution, including in the marine environment**

**Zero draft text of the international legally binding
instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine
environment**



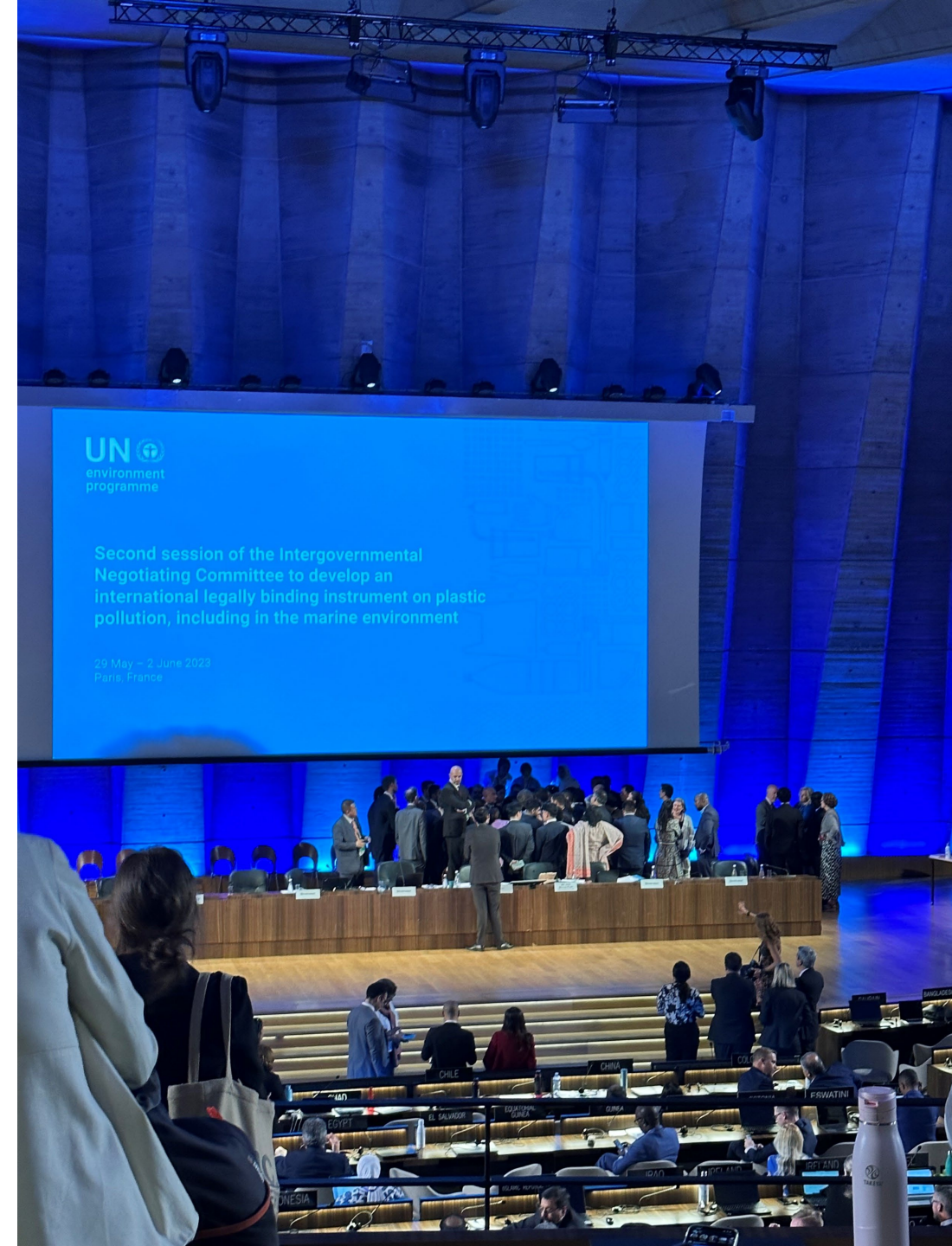
SINTEF

Plastics Zero Draft Text

- Tool to start negotiations
- Includes detailed lists of potential provisions covering the entire life cycle of plastics
- Legally binding and voluntary provisions



- Tracking and data gathering solutions needed to understand plastics full impact





SINTEF



Teknologi for et bedre samfunn

This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-NC



Collaboration and coordination among all government levels (national, regional, local) is essential.

National Implementation

- **Legislation and Regulations** – align with treaty's provisions (emission standards, conservation policies)
- **Institutional Capacity** – Establish agencies responsible for implementing and monitoring
- **Monitoring and Reporting** – Develop systems to track progress and compliance



Local Implementation

- **Capacity Building** – of local authorities and communities
- **Local Regulations** – aligning with the treaty (waste management, land use, and resource conservation)
- **Education and Outreach** – Educational programs to raise awareness
- **Funding** – To implement local initiatives and projects related to treaty obligations



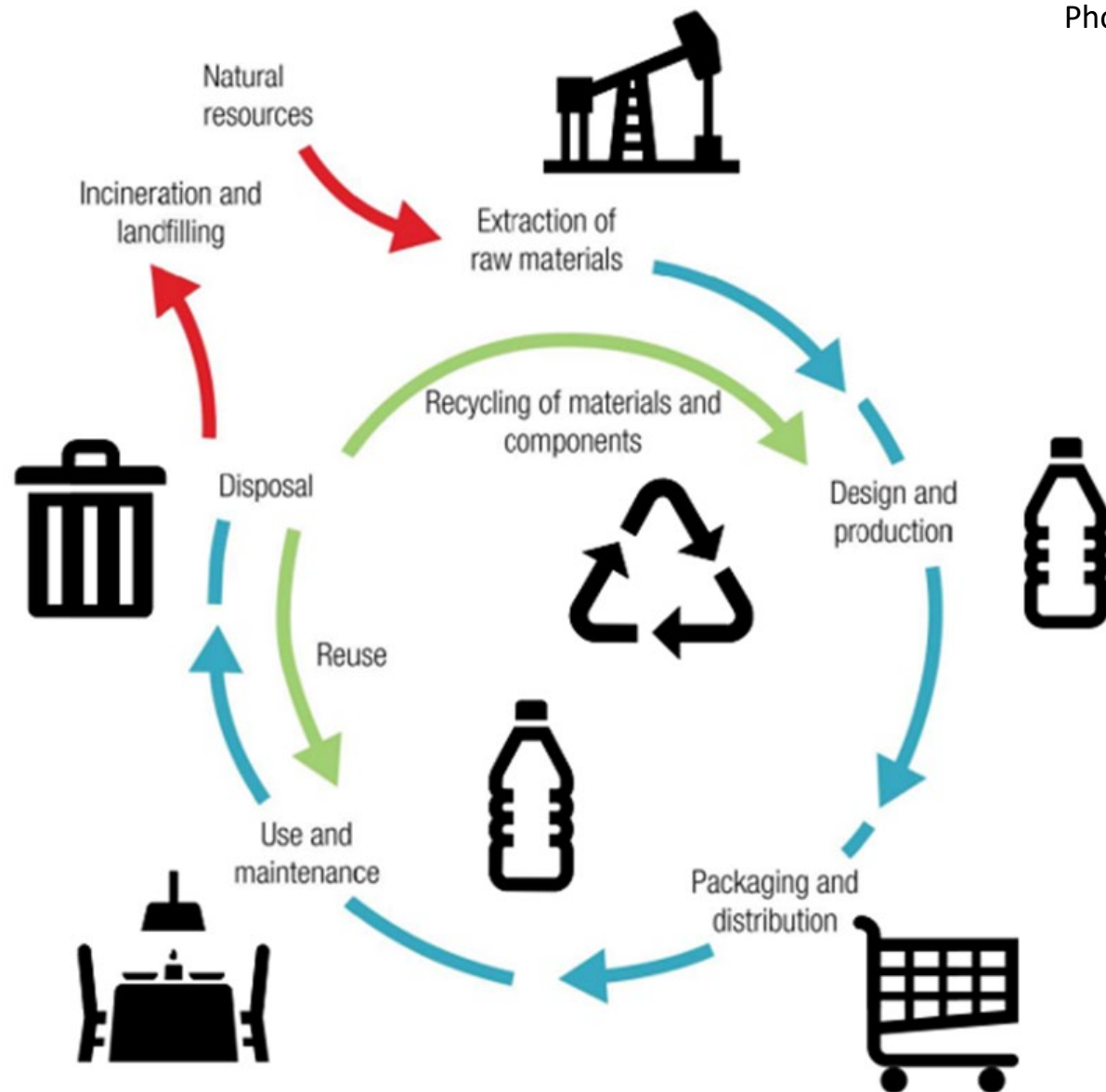


We can and should provide knowledge to the policy-making process



SINTEF

Photo credit: UNEP 2022, Pollution & Waste
Twitter: @emilyccowan



We cannot talk about plastics without addressing the full lifecycle



SINTEF

Future outlooks

- *Businesses* can invest in R&D to find innovative ways to reduce their plastic materials, use, and waste.
- *Policymakers* can involve local stakeholders in the decision-making process to ensure that policies are realistic and effective.
- *Scientists* and *students* can help gather data on local plastic, production, usage and pollution levels, which can inform local policies and practices.



Teknologi for et bedre samfunn

This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA-NC](#)



WE WILL JUDGE THE [PLASTICS] TREATY NOT ON WHAT IT PROMISES, BUT ON WHAT IT DOES' – NGO MAJOR GROUP



Emily Cowan, Research Scientist

SINTEF Ocean

emily.cowan@sintef.no



emilychristinecowan



@emilyccowan



The Research
Council of Norway

PLASTICENE

The role of humans in the life of plastic

RCN Project: 318730



GOMPLAR

Governance of Marine Litter in the Arctic

RCN Project: 315402