

INC-3 Side Event 12

Socio-economic considerations in the transition to circular approaches to plastics, including human rights approaches and inclusion of the informal waste sector

Friday, 17 November 2023 from 1:30 to 2:45 pm, CR 14, United Nations Office at Nairobi

Objectives

This side event is intended to explore the socio-economic dimensions of circular approaches to plastic pollution, with a specific focus on human rights-related issues within the world of work. The side event will aim to address the following key questions:

1. What will be the implications of addressing plastic pollution in the world of work?
2. What opportunities and challenges will arise for enterprises and workers, particularly those operating within the informal economy?
3. How can a future treaty leverage existing human rights treaties, including the International Labour Standards?
4. What role should non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play in this process?

By delving into these questions, we aim to provide insights into how addressing plastic pollution will impact the world of work, the opportunities and challenges it presents, how human rights principles can be incorporated into a future plastic treaty, and the involvement of NGOs in the process.

Context

A just transition to sustainability is necessary and urgent. A human rights-based or a human-centered approach is essential for achieving economic, social and environmental sustainability through the life cycle of plastics. A human rights-based approach focuses on capacity development, both of duty bearers to meet their obligations and of individuals to claim their rights. The 111th International Labour Conference, held in June 2023, adopted the **Conclusions** focused on the definition of "just transition", emphasizing the importance of promoting environmentally sustainable economies in a way that is inclusive, by creating decent work opportunities, reducing inequality and by leaving no one behind. The Conclusions acknowledge that the transition to a greener and more sustainable future will have profound implications for jobs and livelihoods, and therefore the conclusions both endorse the **ILO Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all (2015)** as well as a reinvigorated framework for action. Such a framework covers the social dimension of environmental and climate change broadly through four supportive elements; namely: (i) promoting inclusive, sustainable and job-rich economies; (ii) advancing social justice; (iii) managing the process of just transition; and (iv) financing a just transition. A human rights-based approach emphasizes prioritizing individuals in marginalized or vulnerable situations who face significant barriers to realizing their rights. The ILO Just Transitions Guidelines serve as a means to implement a human-centred approach by promoting just transitions. Well-managed, environmentally sustainable economies and societies' response to plastic pollution can ensure decent work for all, social inclusion, and the eradication of poverty. The four pillars of the Decent Work Agenda—social dialogue, social protection, rights at work, and employment—are crucial components of sustainable development and should be central to policies aimed at fostering robust, inclusive, and sustainable growth and development. In order to achieve a just transition, it is crucial to ensure that enterprises and workers, including those in the informal economy, are not left behind

during the transition. Addressing the informal waste sector, which plays a significant role in managing plastic waste, particularly in developing countries, is a key aspect of the just transition. Workers, trade unions and stakeholders can play vital roles in addressing plastic pollution through a just transition. In this regard, along with the international human rights law, the ILO's international labour standards offer a robust framework for addressing the challenges to the world of work associated with the greening of the economy and, more broadly, with the transition towards sustainable development and poverty eradication. They serve as a testament to the power of collective action, vision and a deep understanding that progress holds true meaning only when no one is left behind.

Provisional Agenda

Welcome	
1:30-1:35	Mustapha Kamal Gueye, Director, Priority Action Programme Just transitions towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies, International Labour Organization (ILO)
Opening remarks	
1:35-1:40	Dr. Ayub Macharia, Director, Environmental Education and Awareness; Ministry of Environment and Forestry; Government of Kenya
Panel discussion	
1:40-1:45	Christina Jäger, Co-founder & Managing Director, Yunus Environment Hub
1:45-1:50	Vito Bonsante, International Pollutants Elimination Network (IPEN)
1:50-2:00	Amira el Halabi, International Alliance of Waste Pickers (IAWP and WIEGO) Maddie Koena, South African Waste Pickers Association (SAWPA)
2:00-2:05	Yasuhiko Kamakura, Chemical Industry Specialist, ILO
2:05-2:40 Questions and Answers	
2:40-2:45	Wrap up and closing