

### GCH position on new instrument on plastic pollution

In this position paper, the Global Cities Hub (GCH) points out several areas where **local and regional governments (LRGs)** can really make a difference in dealing with plastic pollution, and how it should be best reflected in a new international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution that addresses the full life cycle of plastic. We call upon States to include the views, perspectives, and role of all relevant stakeholders, in particular LRGs, during the negotiation process.

**LRGs** have a crucial role to play to fight plastic pollution:

- Plastics are everywhere and LRGs are often responsible for waste management, which includes plastics.
- More and more, LRGs are on the frontlines of urban health, which is affected by the release of microplastics in the environment.
- Further, LRGs are in contact with businesses dealing with plastic production/use and have a better grasp of the concrete reality, given their proximity with people on the ground.

For all these reasons, States need to include LRGs when negotiating the instrument and to ensure its effective implementation, once adopted.

Fighting plastic pollution requires effort from everyone in government and society. In the current revised zero draft (28 December 2023), here are the articles in which it is important to refer to or to include LRGs, according to GCH:

- **Part I. 4. Principles:** the Parties should be guided by the “whole-of-government” approach when implementing the instrument. Indeed, States will need to ensure that the instrument’s obligations are shared with relevant ministries, but also with subnational authorities. States will thus guarantee horizontal and vertical policy coherence across all sectors and levels of government to implement the instrument in the most effective manner.
- **Part II. 9. Waste management:** LRGs are very often responsible for waste management at the subnational level. As such, the GCH suggests that the draft provision explicitly acknowledge the role of LRGs in this area. Further, States should make sure LRGs have the necessary funding and tools they need to efficiently manage waste. To do so, States must ensure that investment and mobilization of resources for effective waste management systems and infrastructure is being undertaken at all levels, including through financial and technical support to subnational governments.
- **Part II. 11. Existing plastic pollution, including in the marine environment:** LRGs are crucial actors when it comes to assessing, identifying, prioritizing, cleaning up and collecting data on zones affected by plastic pollution. In particular, they are essential to effectively mobilize local communities and the private sector in relation

to these activities. They should therefore be explicitly acknowledged among the stakeholders with whom States should cooperate in that regard.

- **Part II. 12. Just transition:** Moving away from plastics is a global urgent goal, but it might cause job losses or poverty, especially in the informal sector, for waste pickers, for example. Because all contexts are different and because of their knowledge of local actors and of the local context, it is important that LRGs are involved in national discussions to ensure a just and fair transition for everyone. The draft instrument should therefore explicitly acknowledge LRGs as relevant stakeholders to be part of any national body considering how to ensure just transition.
- **Part III. 1. Financing** is obviously crucial to fight plastic pollution. While LRGs usually have some resources to implement their decisions, they might need more to effectively address plastic pollution in a holistic manner. Thus, the GCH takes the view that LRGs should be adequately funded and resources to manage waste, to raise awareness of the population, to engage the private sector and to promote circular economy approaches, in ways that support the objectives of the new instrument. The new dedicated fund envisaged should therefore consider eligibility of LRGs to apply directly for funding of relevant programmes and activities aiming at addressing plastic pollution.
- **Part III. 2 Capacity building:** Implementation of the new instrument needs to take place at all levels, with the involvement of LRGs, which have decision-making powers at their level. Getting international support and training can make them more effective in the implementation of the new instrument.
- **Part IV. 1-2-3 National Action Plans, implementation, reporting on progress:** LRGs should be involved in the design, implementation and monitoring of national action plans to facilitate implementation of the new instrument. Any review mechanism should ensure that implementation is being considered at all levels of the States, including subnational ones.
- **Part IV. 7 Awareness raising, education and research:** Given their proximity to the population, LRGs are particularly well-positioned to engage in awareness-raising, share information and encourage behavioural change to reduce plastic pollution. That is why the GCH underlines the importance to explicitly refer to them in this draft provision.
- **Part IV. 8 Stakeholder engagement:** as mentioned above, fighting plastic pollution must follow a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. While many stakeholders must be engaged, explicitly referring to LRGs is important, given their power to take influential decisions at their level, their proximity with the population and their knowledge of the local contexts and stakeholders.