



Imagine if all the countries on the earth were to agree a treaty to end plastic pollution worldwide. Imagine if everyone were to start looking for solutions, put them into practice, and support poorer countries in the process? It sounds like a dream, but it can be reality.

The world's countries often sign treaties and agreements on certain issues at the **United Nations**, which are then legally binding for all of them. As just one example, they have successfully prevented further depletion of the ozone layer with the Montreal Protocol. An agreement like this could, in principle, also be used to stop the global plastic crisis.

To date, many countries have already come out in favor of an international plastic agreement, which the **United Nations** Environment Assembly considers an effective measure. What needs to be done to move it forward?

The **United Nations** can draw on the International Negotiation Committee (INC) to negotiate the specific details of the plastic agreement. The INC is made up of **government officials**, **NGOs** (non-governmental organizations), **scientists**, and representatives from **industry**. Young people can also participate as observers through the **Major Group for Children and Youth**. Once the INC has drawn up the exact text of the agreement, it can be signed by countries. In most countries, accession

to an agreement also needs to be declared legally binding by the national parliament. Once a certain number of these ratification processes has been reached, the agreement enters into force and must be implemented by the signatory countries.

What matters now? To ensure it actually does some good, the most important thing is that the INC must include all important measures in the agreement. From the perspective of civil society, a reduction in plastic production must be part of the agreement from the very beginning, as this is the only way to effectively tackle the plastic problem. Checks must also be carried out to ensure that the measures are both being put into practice and effective. Every country that has signed the agreement must consent to these checks. Poorer nations should be offered money and support to carry them out.

Some governments think that national initiatives are enough to solve the plastic problem. Others think we only need to focus on plastic in the oceans. Neither are right. But if enough countries come together to support an international plastic agreement, they can fight for a cleaner, healthier, and fairer world together.