

## OPEN LETTER TO THE CHAIR AND NEGOTIATORS AT THE INC-5.2

August 6, 2025

**H.E. Ambassador Luis Vayas Valdivieso**

Chair

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

### **Distinguished Delegates**

Second Part of the Fifth Session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-5.2)

**Subject:** *Youth Call to Action on Tobacco's Toxic Plastic Pollution and Industry's Accountability*

**Dear Ambassador Valdivieso and Delegates,**

We, the Global Youth Voices ([GYV](#)), Children and Youth Major Group ([CYMG](#)) to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), [Hidden Plastic](#), and [River Warrior Indonesia](#), write to you on the occasion of International Youth Day 2025 to call for a plastics treaty that aligns with global health agreements such as the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control ([WHO FCTC](#)) — one that bans all cigarette filters, not just those misleadingly labeled as recyclable, biodegradable, or circular, despite clear evidence that none are safe or sustainable.

To give life to the theme “Youth Empowerment for a Sustainable Future,” we challenge those who endanger not only our present but also our future. Most notoriously, the tobacco industry is a major contributor to toxic plastic pollution and youth addiction, hooking young people through products falsely marketed as harmless but linked to lasting mental health harms such as anxiety, depression, and cognitive impairment. Through such deception and manipulation, it continues to exploit our generation for profit and protect its vested interests, leaving us to confront lifelong consequences.

Cigarette filters are toxic, non-essential single-use plastic that offer no proven health benefit, yet are designed to promote cigarettes as less harmful. Their widespread littering in public spaces contributes significantly to plastic pollution and reinforces misinformation about safety and disposability. Every discarded butt represents how corporate profit has been placed above youth health, truth, and sustainability. Therefore, our demand is clear: **ban all cigarette filters.**

The draft [Chair's text](#) mention of filters “[made with plastic](#)” is concerning as it suggests nonplastic filters are welcome. Tobacco companies have promoted misleading alternatives like “eco-friendly” or “biodegradable” filters, sponsored clean-up campaigns such as “World is Not Our Ashtray,” and disguised themselves as sustainability partners per extended producer responsibility ([EPR](#)) schemes, in the form of corporate social responsibility ([CSR](#)) programs, all while avoiding accountability for their toxic plastic pollution. These actions are not genuine sustainability efforts, they are greenwashing tactics that mask harmful practices and deflect responsibility. Hence, we demand a treaty that **puts an end to**

**greenwashing, excludes tobacco products from EPR schemes, and mandates clear liability,** demanding that tobacco companies pay for the harms they caused and future pollution.

On International Youth Day, we speak not only as advocates but as the generation that will live with the consequences of your decisions.

We call on the negotiating delegates to align their efforts to combat plastic pollution with their commitments under the WHO FCTC. The tobacco industry must not be allowed to manipulate environmental policies to serve its interests. Thus, the treaty text must explicitly **mention the WHO FCTC and reject tobacco industry interference** in the decision-making processes. A plastics treaty that ignores this, or fails to align with global health agreements like the WHO FCTC, is not a solution, but a loophole for the tobacco industry to exploit. Provisions like EPR schemes, disguised as CSR, are a greenwashing tactic already called out at the Tenth Session of the Conference of the Parties ([COP10](#)) to the WHO FCTC for deflecting accountability and undermining public health and environmental goals.

We demand a treaty that protects young people, not polluters; that serves public health, not corporate profit. Anything less is a betrayal of our future.

**Respectfully,**

**Signed by spokespersons of the *Global Youth Voices (GYV)* and representatives of the *Youth Plastic Action Network (YPAN)* and the *Children and Youth Major Group to UNEP (CYMG)*, *Hidden Plastic*, and *River Warrior Indonesia***

1. **Lisa Lu**, International Youth Tobacco Control
2. **Tanushree Jain**, International Pharmaceutical Students' Federation
3. **Juan Camilo Herrera Palacio**, Alianza Juvenil
4. **Sarah Rauzana**, ASEAN Youth Organization
5. **Ana Paula Ramis Aguilar**, Red Internacional de Promotores ODS
6. **Hilario de los Santos**, Healthy Philippines Alliance Youth Network
7. **Lesego Mateme**, South African Tobacco-Free Youth Forum
8. **Mehrbano Hosseinirad**, Iranian Medical Students Association
9. **Yvette Mbewe**, Zambia Heart and Stroke Foundation
10. **Shellan Saling**, *on behalf of the Youth Plastic Action Network (YPAN) and the Children and Youth Major Group to UNEP (CYMG)*
11. **Zara Hawkins and Ashton Hawkins**, *on behalf of Hidden Plastic*
12. **Aeshnina Azzahra**, *on behalf of the River Warrior Indonesia*

#### **About the Global Youth Voices**

The Global Youth Voices (GYV) is a movement that represents youth coalitions and organizations from across the globe that seek to make the tobacco industry pay for the harms caused to the planet and its people, not only for those in this generation but also future generations. GYV's previous statements and initiatives have been recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO) and at the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) Conference of the Parties. The Global Center for Good Governance in Tobacco Control (GGTC) convenes and provides technical assistance to GYV.