



Topic: The implications of plastic pollution on human rights

Human rights and the environment are inseparably intertwined; neither can truly be realised without the other.<sup>1</sup> A clean, healthy, and sustainable environment is therefore not merely desirable- it is essential to the enjoyment and protection of our fundamental human rights. As the Human Rights Council we hold the mandate and moral duty to protect and promote all human rights, including the right to a clean, sustainable and healthy environment, as reaffirmed in our adopted resolution on the 8<sup>th</sup> of October 2021 by 43 member states.<sup>2</sup> It is our obligated duty to deal with issues that may affect a human's right to a clean, sustainable and healthy environment, therefore we must now recognise and acknowledge that plastic pollution has become a national issue and a threat to the same human rights we solemnly aim to protect.

Plastic pollution has reached an unprecedented level, contaminating oceans, ecosystems and harming biodiversity in our respective countries and posing as a larger threat to the wellbeing of all humans.<sup>3</sup> Therefore as the delegate of the Republic of France, we recognise the gravity of this issue and reaffirm our commitment to addressing this issue, and the need for collective action to mitigate the implications of plastic pollution on human rights. Just as we have solemnly pledged to protect and restore the health, resilience and productivity of our oceans in resolution 58/16, we must now reaffirm that same commitment to end plastic pollution as these two challenges are one and the same.<sup>4</sup> By tackling plastic waste we safeguard marine biodiversity, uphold ecosystem-based approaches and precautionary approaches written in international law, and we advance the three pillars of sustainable development for present and future generations.<sup>5</sup>

The Republic of France acknowledges its duty as a member of the Human Rights Council to promote and protect human rights and also recognises its moral obligation to sustain the planet for future generations to come, therefore we recommend necessary measures to be taken to combat plastic pollution and recognise that plastic pollution, is not just an environmental threat but one that also affects the overall health, livelihood and quality of life of humans. Therefore it is essential for us to make use of the purpose of this council and

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<sup>1</sup> Cleaner Materials "The world of plastic waste: A review" (March 2024) 11 (accessed 22 November 2025).

<sup>2</sup> GNHRE "UNHRC Resolution recognising a human right to a healthy environment" ( n.d. ) <https://gnhre.org/?p=14253> ( accessed 22 November 2025).

<sup>3</sup> Geneva Environment Network "Plastics and Human Rights, Plastics, and the Environment Series" (07-08-2025) <https://www.genevaenvironmentnetwork.org/resources/updates/plastics-and-human-rights/> (accessed 22 November 2025).

<sup>4</sup> United Nations General Assembly " Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 3 April 2025" 2025 1.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations General Assembly " Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 3 April 2025".

cooperate internationally to address this global issue and protect this basic human right as it is our purpose to do so.

The impacts of plastic pollution as we are aware are felt in multiple areas including climate change, human health, biodiversity, and the human rights we aim to protect.<sup>6</sup> Statistics have determined that on a global scale, plastic production exceeds 380 million tonnes annually with 40% of production being single-use plastics, 91% of plastic waste not being recycled and an estimate of 8 million tonnes of plastic waste ending up in oceans or in landfills resulting in the deaths of over 100 000 marine mammals and 1 million seabirds.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, plastic pollution also poses a threat to technology, trade, and causes an increase in water and soil contamination.<sup>8</sup> It is also important to note that every life cycle of plastics affect human health with toxic omissions being released during manufacturing, the toxic additives found in plastic consumer products, the result of poor waste management regarding plastic disposal and recycling, and the number of disinformation campaigns on the risks and solutions to plastic pollution which do not assist in mitigating this issue or accurately informing our citizens on how they should act responsibly when handling plastics, such is evident from the plastic pollution statistic in 2024 where it was reported that only 9% of plastic waste was recycled worldwide with 22% being improperly disposed of.<sup>9</sup> This drastic difference in figures highlights the need for improved plastic recycling awareness and other measures to tackle this global issue.

As the Republic of France, a country that contributes heavily to this global issue, with approximately 4.5 million tonnes of plastic waste produced a year, with only 23% being recycled, with 41% mainly incinerated or landfilled and with 100 000 tonnes ending up in the environment every year, we heavily commit ourselves to mitigate this global issue.<sup>10</sup> To demonstrate our commitment to effectively combating this global issue we have launched the 2025-2030 Plastics Plan to intensify the fight we are currently battling and we urge each State to follow suit. The 2025-2030 Plastic Plan aims to decrease the use of plastic by promoting consumption habits that are more sustainable, developing efficient reuse systems, improve recycling by turning it into a strong circular industry focused on creating recycling-related employment and finally ensuring that the State and other entities lead by example by adopting plastic saving practices.<sup>11</sup> We as the Republic of France firmly believe that by taking these small steps and actively working towards achieving a plastic pollution free environment this global issue will be resolved and cease to exist.

We, as the Human Rights Council have explicitly recognised the link between human rights and a healthy and clean environment therefore it is our duty to ensure that it is not infringed upon on a global scale. The Republic of France urges states to recognise the severity and impact plastic pollution has on our environment and our people and ask that each State affirms to taking necessary “go green” measures to mitigate this global issue and satisfy their moral obligation to sustain the planet and their obligation to protect and promote human rights. If we do not act now and combat this issue head-on, studies have shown that the implications of plastic pollution would ultimately be: higher rates of health issues such as cancer and reproductive disorders, it could cost the economy billions to clean up excessive plastic waste,

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<sup>6</sup> Geneva Environment Network “Plastics and Human Rights, Plastics, and the Environment Series”

<sup>7</sup> Waste Direct “Plastic Waste Statistics & Trends” (22-10-2025) <https://wastedirect.co.uk/blog/plastic-waste-statistics/> ( accessed 22 November 2025)

<sup>8</sup> Geneva Environment Network “Plastics and Human Rights, Plastics, and the Environment Series”

<sup>9</sup> Geneva Environment Network “Plastics and Human Rights, Plastics, and the Environment Series”

<sup>10</sup> CVP “Plastic Plan 2025-2030’: France commits to fighting plastic pollution” (13-11-2025) <https://cvp-packaging.com/en/blog/plastic-plan-2025-2030-france-commits-to-fighting-plastic-pollution-n105> (accessed 22 November 2025)

<sup>11</sup> CVP “Plastic Plan 2025-2030’: France commits to fighting plastic pollution.”

it could drastically increase climate change and could also result in a higher death rate for our animals, therefore it is imperative for us to avoid such a future.<sup>12</sup>

Let us take initiative and seize this historic moment to rewrite the narrative of plastic pollution: from a global scourge to a catalyst for a new era of stewardship, where the rights to dignity, health and a clean environment are upheld for every generation. As a union we will turn the tide and secure a thriving planet for our people and the future generation as it is our duty and moral obligation to do so.

“ We will not have a society if we destroy the environment.” - Margaret Mead

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<sup>12</sup> Ecopify “What does plastic pollution mean for our Future?” (15-10-2025)  
[https://ecopify.com/blogs/news/what-does-plastic-pollution-mean-for-our-future?srsId=AfmBOor2LOGLQPSYsjNzKK08ugglwzGxh7JEkgaXMRaW8oKt6eHMHR\\_w](https://ecopify.com/blogs/news/what-does-plastic-pollution-mean-for-our-future?srsId=AfmBOor2LOGLQPSYsjNzKK08ugglwzGxh7JEkgaXMRaW8oKt6eHMHR_w) (accessed 22 November 2025).