

17.10.18, Brussels

Dear Member of the European Parliament,

We are writing on behalf of the undersigned organisations, representing hundreds of thousands of citizens across Europe. We are part of the Rethink Plastic alliance and the #breakfreefromplastic movement, comprised of over 1,400 groups and civil society organisations around the world who have come together to end plastic pollution. You have an historic opportunity to lead in halting the tide of single-use plastics.

Next week, you will vote on Ms. Frédérique Ries' report on the Commission's proposal to reduce pollution from single-use plastics and fishing gear. We are increasingly seeing how plastics are polluting the land and ocean, killing and injuring wildlife and posing a risk to human health. The Commission's proposal for reducing the impacts of single-use plastic items and preventing lost or abandoned fishing gear from plaguing the ocean is an opportunity for the EU, and the European Parliament, to be at the vanguard of tackling plastic pollution.

EU citizens are calling for action on plastic pollution - over 90% of citizens highlighted this in a Eurobarometer poll<sup>1</sup> and earlier this month, we handed over a petition to Ms. Ries signed by more than 260,000 citizens<sup>2</sup> calling for an ambitious report from the Environment Committee. In September, Break Free From Plastic organisations across Europe got our hands dirty cleaning up plastic pollution and measuring the top polluting items and brands. The mass clean-up revealed several of the world's most powerful corporations, including Coca-Cola, PepsiCo and Nestlé, as the biggest plastic polluters.<sup>3</sup> Next week, we are asking you to put up your hand and be counted, making sure that the EU enacts ambitious measures that will reduce pollution of our environment.

Ms. Ries' report was adopted in the Environment Committee on October 10th with a large majority (51/10) and contains some strong new provisions, improving the ambition of the Commission's proposal. However, there are areas that need to be strengthened.

The undersigned organisations are calling on you to.

1. **Strengthen the definition of single-use plastic to ensure it is clear and legally robust, and to notably avoid** that items simply relabelled as "reusable" might fall out of the scope of the Directive. We suggest the definition, "*single use plastic product' means a product that is made wholly or partly from plastic and that is conceived, designed or placed on the market to be used over a short time span, without multiple refill or reuse trips or rotations to a producer, before it is discarded*";
2. **Keep the definition of plastic as proposed by the Commission and adopted in Ries report:** ensure that single-use products with a plastic lining, and biodegradable and compostable single-use plastic, are included in the scope of the Directive. This ensures the EU is moving towards a true circular economy and not replacing one type of single-use with another;
3. **Support strong Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes:** for single-use plastics which include coverage of clean-up and waste management costs. Ensure that all items subject to EPR in Ries' report remain covered. Support collection and recycling targets and new EPR schemes for fishing gear;

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission, 2014. Attitudes of Europeans towards Waste Management and Resource Efficiency, Flash Eurobarometer 388; [http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/flash/fl\\_388\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/flash/fl_388_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://actions.sumofus.org/a/plastics-envi-vote-oct-2018>

<sup>3</sup> Break Free From Plastic, Global Brand Audit Report 2018 <https://www.breakfreefromplastic.org/globalbrandauditreport2018/>

4. **Keep items added to the market restriction list (Annex B) in Ries' report, i.e.** very lightweight plastic bags, polystyrene food and drink containers, and products made of 'oxo-degradable' plastic. These plastics have significant negative impacts on the marine environment, and all have easily available alternatives, thus there is no reason to continue using them and increase plastic pollution;
5. **Add specific provisions on sanitary items:** single-use sanitary items come at a high cost to women and the environment<sup>4</sup> - conventional sanitary towels are made up of 90% plastic<sup>5</sup> and the average woman throws away up to 135 kg of disposable towels, tampons and tampon applicators in her lifetime<sup>6</sup>. Specific awareness raising programmes on reusable alternatives to single-use menstrual products should be put in place, notably in schools, and Member States should ensure reusable alternatives are made widely available, including in pharmacies and large retailers.
6. **Ensure that Member States can adopt restriction measures** for items listed in Annex A, i.e. food containers and beverage cups - by ensuring that the reference to Article 18 of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive in Article 4 is removed.

If adopted, the Ries report, complemented by the above, would contribute to reducing plastic pollution by more than 50 percent for the most littered single-use items, avoiding environmental damage which would otherwise cost €22 billion by 2030, and avoid emitting 3.4 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> by 2030<sup>7</sup>. The only thing required to achieve, and indeed exceed this ambition is your support. We encourage you to seize the opportunity of next week's vote, and to take the lead in tackling plastic-pollution.

Yours sincerely,



Delphine Lévi Alvarès,  
Coordinator of the Rethink Plastic Alliance & Break Free From Plastic Europe

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<sup>4</sup> <https://zerowasteurope.eu/downloads/64575/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://hej-support.org/together-for-toxic-and-plastic-free-periods/>

<sup>6</sup> "Flow, the Cultural Story of Menstruation" book

<sup>7</sup> [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-18-3909\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-18-3909_en.htm)

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#breakfreefromplastic

#breakfreefromplastic is a global movement envisioning a future free from plastic pollution, counting nearly 1,400 organisations from across the world and 62 active members in Europe. Rethink Plastic is the alliance of #breakfreefromplastic members working with European policy makers to stop plastic pollution through reduction, better design and better management of plastics.

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#### SIGNATORIES



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