

Open Letter to the world's worst plastic polluters on World Refill Day

Dear Mr. Quincey, CEO of Coca-Cola, Mr. Laguarda, CEO of PepsiCo, Mr. Schneider, CEO of Nestle, Mr. Jope, CEO of Unilever and Mr. Moeller, CEO of Procter and Gamble,

On [World Refill Day](#), we the undersigned XX organizations are writing to you, as representatives of the [5 biggest plastic polluters in the world](#), to seek your commitment to transparent, ambitious and accountable reuse and refill systems as part of wider commitments to reduce the amount of plastic that you produce. This is a matter of utmost priority.

The level of the plastic crisis demands urgent action. Plastic production is set to rise by 40% over the next decade, driven in large part by single-use plastic packaging. The impact it's having on the oceans, terrestrial environment, wildlife and human health is devastating. At least 14 million tons of plastic end up in the ocean every year. A growing body of evidence is showing significant [pollution of the soil with microplastics](#). Plastic has now been found in human blood, lungs and placenta, and [many of the chemical additives used in plastic are toxic to human health](#).

The harm caused by plastic begins at the very start of its lifecycle. Much of the plastic and petrochemical infrastructure, including in the United States, is located in areas that are Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), rural and low-income communities, who deal with [severe health impacts](#) from the toxic industrial pollution. This is a situation seen around the world. Plastic production, use and disposal is much more than an environmental problem, it's also a social justice, racial justice and human rights issue.

In addition, the majority of plastic is made from fossil fuels, and the entire life cycle generates harmful greenhouse gas emissions that are a threat to the climate and to human health. [One study](#) found that plastic will add more than 850 million metric tons of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere in a single year. This equates to the pollution from 189 new 500-megawatt coal-fired power plants. If the entire lifecycle of plastic were a country, it would be the fifth largest emitter in the world. It's evident that plastic production is incompatible with climate goals and the global effort to restrict warming to 1.5 degrees celsius. The IPCC is clear, this is our last warning before the world is set irrevocably on a path to climate breakdown.

Your companies [represent the five biggest plastic polluters in the world](#) and as such, need to be at the forefront of finding systemic solutions to this plastic driven ecological crisis. We cannot recycle our way out of this problem, the damage caused by plastic production will only be stopped by reducing plastic use.

There are three simple steps that we urge you to adopt to become global leaders in tackling the plastic crisis:

1. REVEAL the full extent of your plastic footprint if you do not already do so. This is a core part of accountability and essential if you are to begin to reduce it. Reporting should be per single use plastic item as well as weight.

2. REDUCE the amount of plastic you use driven by setting ambitious, transparent targets and supporting action plans on how to achieve them. Then prioritizing achieving those targets.
3. REINVENT your packaging to ensure it's refilled and reused by design. In order to do this, you should commit to collaborating with other companies to standardize reusable packaging and build shared reuse systems and infrastructure.

We recognise the injustice of companies based in the Global North making decisions on packaging formats that have severe social and environmental costs for communities in the Global South. It's time your corporations redress this by investing in non toxic reusable methods of delivering products that are affordable and accessible for all. At the same time, to stop relying on burning technologies for disposing of packaging materials that are already on the market.

By focusing on reducing the use and demand for plastic packaging and centering reuse and refill at the heart of your response, you will be illustrating a true commitment to effectively tackling the plastic driven ecological crisis that we face, and an acknowledgement of your role within this crisis. It's becoming increasingly evident that putting the majority of your sustainability efforts on recycling is not the answer to tackling this crisis. While recycling provides livelihood opportunities for many people, it is not enough to address pollution in many areas of the plastic life cycle, particularly in plastic production. Moreover, recycling some types of plastic is [not economically feasible](#), forcing governments and businesses to pursue harmful and unfair disposal options like waste trade and incineration.

These steps, if taken with ambition, urgency and effectiveness, would position you as world leaders in tackling plastic pollution, as opposed to lead polluters. We, as a global community look forward to supporting you in making this rapid transition away from single-use plastics towards a sustainable growth in reuse and refill packaging solutions. We will however, equally be here to hold vague promises, false solutions or deflections from effective solutions to account.

In hope, urgency, and optimism,