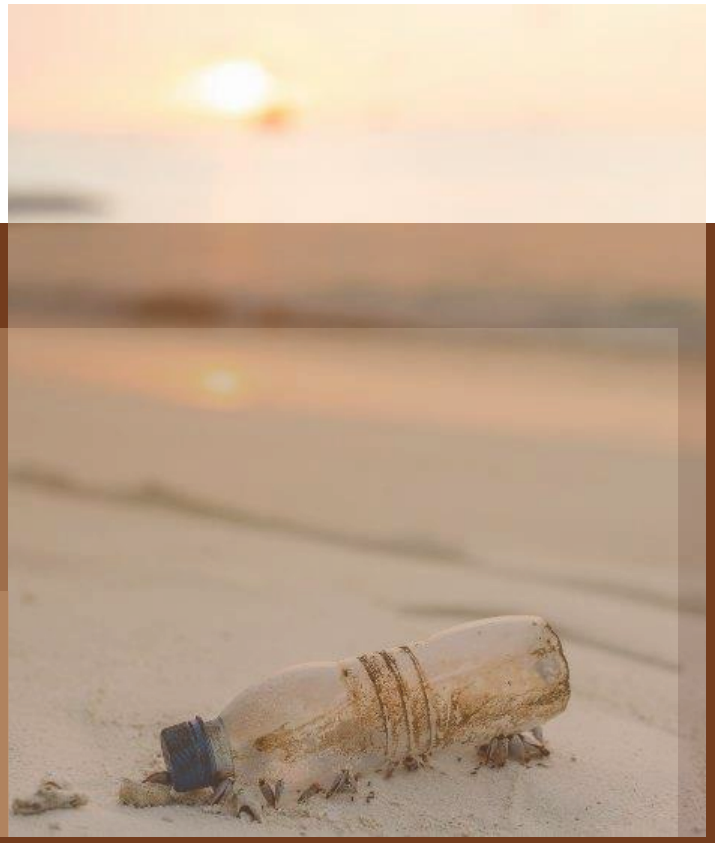

# MEAs and the Global Plastic Treaty – Q&A

Exploring Gaps, Synergies, and Opportunities for a Comprehensive Approach

Dr Thomas Maes

AFRIPAC: Effective Capacity Building for Global Plastics Treaty in Africa

Funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD)

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# Are existing MEAs Adequate for Plastics?

- Short answer: No
- Current MEAs cover some aspects of plastic pollution but fall short in addressing the complexity of chemical additives and lifecycle impacts.

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# Are there synergies with Other MEAs?

- Basel Convention – Plastic waste movement
- Stockholm Convention – POPs in additives
- Rotterdam Convention – Trade of hazardous chemicals
- CBD – Biodiversity impacts
- Paris Agreement – Emissions from plastics
- Regional Agreements – Localised cooperation

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Which chemicals in plastics are covered by the Basel convention?

## Basel Convention

- **Focus**: Transboundary movement and environmentally sound management of hazardous and plastic waste.
- **Relevance**:
  - Regulates **hazardous additives** (e.g., lead, cadmium, brominated flame retardants) in plastic waste.
  - Since 2021, **most plastic waste** is covered through the **Plastic Waste Amendments**, including waste containing hazardous additives.
  - The **Technical Guidelines** detail specific additives and polymer types

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# Which chemicals in plastics are covered by the Stockholm convention?

## Stockholm Convention (POPs)

- **Focus**: Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) in products and waste.
- **Relevance**:
  - Covers several **chemicals used in plastics** such as:
    - **PBDEs** (polybrominated diphenyl ethers – flame retardants)
    - **PFOS** and **PFOA** (used in some coatings, packaging)
    - **Short-chain chlorinated paraffins (SCCPs)**
    - **Hexabromocyclododecane (HBCD)**
  - These are regulated for restriction or elimination, including when present in plastic materials.

- **Estimate**: ~10–15 major POPs used in plastics are covered under Stockholm

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Which chemicals in plastics are covered by the Rotterdam Convention?

## Rotterdam Convention

- **Focus**: Prior informed consent for trade of hazardous chemicals.
- **Relevance**:
  - Some additives and monomers used in plastics (e.g., **nonylphenol ethoxylates**, **PFOS**) are listed.
  - Does **not ban** but requires consent for import/export.

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# Which chemicals in plastics are covered by the Minamata Convention?

## Minamata Convention on Mercury

- **Limited relevance**: Mercury is not typically a plastic additive but could occur in legacy products or pigments

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# Are other MEAs really covering chemicals in plastics?

| MEA | Type of Chemicals Covered | Estimated Number Relevant to Plastics |
|---|---|---|
| **Stockholm Convention** | POP additives in plastics | ~10–15 |
| **Basel Convention** | Hazardous constituents in plastic waste | 20+ (context-specific) |
| **Rotterdam Convention** | Trade-regulated chemicals | Several (context-specific) |
| **Minamata Convention** | Very limited relevance | 0–1 |

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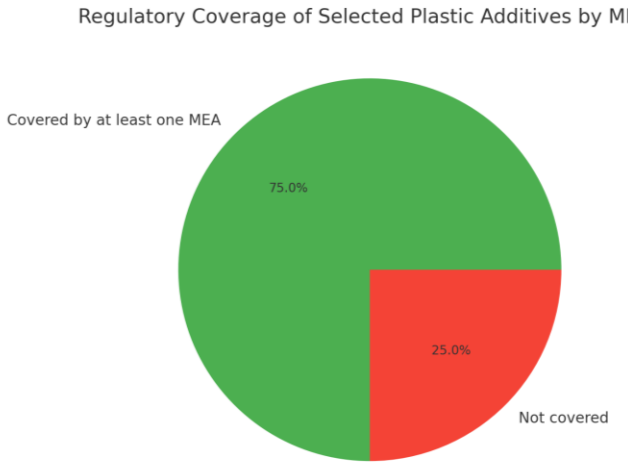
# Are there gaps in MEAs covering chemicals in plastics?

## Key Gaps

- Most of the **16,000+ known chemicals** used in plastics are **not yet covered** by MEAs.
- **75% of the chemical groups are covered** by at least one MEAs, but not across the entire lifecycle of plastics




- Many **plastic additives** are unregulated internationally, including:
  - UV stabilizers, plasticizers (e.g., phthalates),
  - colorants, flame retardants, and
  - emerging contaminants like **bisphenols** and **novel PFAS**.

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# Are there gaps in MEAs covering chemicals in plastics?

## The nerdy answer ☺

| Chemical (Group) | Basel Convention | Stockholm Convention | Rotterdam Convention | Regulated by Any MEA |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Phthalates (plasticizers) | TRUE | FALSE | FALSE | TRUE |
| BPA and analogues | FALSE | FALSE | FALSE | FALSE |
| PBDEs (flame retardants) | TRUE | TRUE | FALSE | TRUE |
| HBCD (flame retardant) | TRUE | TRUE | FALSE | TRUE |
| PFOS/PFOA | TRUE | TRUE | TRUE | TRUE |
| Chlorinated paraffins | TRUE | TRUE | TRUE | TRUE |
| Lead compounds | TRUE | FALSE | TRUE | TRUE |
| Cadmium compounds | TRUE | FALSE | TRUE | TRUE |
| UV stabilizers | FALSE | FALSE | FALSE | FALSE |
| Antioxidants | FALSE | FALSE | FALSE | FALSE |
| Nonylphenol ethoxylates | TRUE | FALSE | TRUE | TRUE |
| Oxo-degradable additives | TRUE | FALSE | FALSE | TRUE |
| Tetrabromobisphenol A (TBBPA) | FALSE | FALSE | FALSE | FALSE |
| Bisphenol S (BPS) | FALSE | FALSE | FALSE | FALSE |
| DEHP | TRUE | TRUE | TRUE | TRUE |
| DBP | TRUE | TRUE | TRUE | TRUE |
| BBP | TRUE | TRUE | TRUE | TRUE |
| DIBP | TRUE | TRUE | TRUE | TRUE |
| Organotin compounds | TRUE | FALSE | FALSE | TRUE |
| Short-chain PFAS | TRUE | FALSE | FALSE | TRUE |
| Formaldehyde | FALSE | FALSE | TRUE | TRUE |
| Vinyl chloride monomer | FALSE | FALSE | FALSE | FALSE |
| Styrene | FALSE | FALSE | FALSE | FALSE |
| Acrylonitrile | FALSE | FALSE | TRUE | TRUE |

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# What are the limitations of Existing MEAs?

- Limited lifecycle coverage (mostly end-of-life)
- Narrow chemical scope (e.g. only POPs, specific compound)
- Regional enforcement gaps (e.g. REACH)
- Inadequate regulation of chemical mixtures
- Slow listing of emerging concerns

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# What lessons can we learn from other MEAs?

- Provisions for control & monitoring
- Implementation & enforcement measures
- Financial support mechanisms (e.g. GEF)
- Capacity building & tech transfer
- Science-based targets & adaptive management

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# Which opportunities lie ahead with the GPT?

- Full lifecycle approach to plastics
- Transparency on additives (e.g. EDCs, PFAS)
- Harmonized global standards
- Support safer material innovation
- Enhance tracking and labeling for recyclers

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# What type of financial mechanisms exist in other MEAs?

| MEA | Main Financial Mechanism | Type |
|---|---|---|
| **Stockholm Convention** | GEF | Official mechanism |
| **Basel & Rotterdam** | Voluntary Trust Funds, regional centres | Technical support |
| **CBD** | GEF | Official mechanism |
| **UNFCCC** | GCF, GEF, LDCF, SCCF, Adaptation Fund | Multiple funds |
| **Minamata** | GEF, SIP | Official + dedicated |
| **CITES** | Core Fund + Donors | Limited mechanism |
| **UNCCD** | GEF + Global Mechanism | Mixed |
| **Montreal Protocol** | Multilateral Fund (MLF) | Dedicated and mandatory |

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# Financial mechanism for the Basel, Rotterdam & Stockholm (BRS) Conventions?

**Main Financial Mechanism: Global Environment Facility (GEF)**

- **Applicable to**: Stockholm Convention (POPs) officially; supports implementation of Basel & Rotterdam via capacity building and projects.
- **Funding Modalities**:
  - National Implementation Plans (NIPs)
  - POPs disposal and alternatives
  - Technical assistance and enabling activities

**Other Financial Avenues:**

- **Special Trust Fund (STF)**: For voluntary contributions to support meetings and technical assistance.
- **Technical Assistance Programme**: Regional centres (e.g., BCRC, SCRCs) receive support to help countries meet obligations.

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# Financial mechanism for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)?

## Global Environment Facility (GEF)

- GEF is the **official financial mechanism**.
- Supports:
  - National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs)
  - Access and benefit sharing (ABS)
  - Biodiversity monitoring and capacity building

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# Financial mechanism for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)?

Key Financial Mechanisms:

| Fund | Purpose |
|---|---|
| **Green Climate Fund (GCF)** | Supports adaptation and mitigation in developing countries |
| **Global Environment Facility (GEF)** | Initial financial mechanism; still supports enabling activities |
| **Adaptation Fund** | Financed by a share of CDM proceeds (Kyoto Protocol) |
| **Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF)** | Supports LDCs in adaptation |
| **Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF)** | Supports broader adaptation actions |

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# Financial mechanism for the Minamata Convention?

## Financial Mechanism:

- **GEF**: Supports enabling activities and implementation projects.
- **Specific International Programme (SIP)**: Focused on capacity-building and technical assistance for developing countries and SIDS.

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# Financial mechanism for Montreal Protocol (Ozone Layer)?

**Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol (MLF)**

- One of the **most successful MEA financial mechanisms**.
- Provides:
  - Grants for phasing out ozone-depleting substances (ODS)
  - Technology transfer
  - Institutional strengthening in developing countries
- Financed by **assessed contributions** from developed countries

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# Financial mechanism for CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species)?

**Funding Sources:**

- **Core Trust Fund**: Financed by mandatory contributions from Parties.
- **External donors**: Support specific capacity-building and enforcement projects.
- **MIKE programme** (Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants): Separate donor-supported initiative.

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# Financial mechanism for UNCCD (Desertification)?

**Global Mechanism (GM):**

- Mobilizes financial resources for the implementation of the Convention.
- Works with:
  - **GEF** (main mechanism)
    - **Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF)**
    - **Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF)**
  - **Green Climate Fund (GCF)**
  - **International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)**
  - **Bilateral donors**

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# What is the conclusion?

- Existing MEAs provide partial coverage for plastic pollution across its entire life cycle.
- The Global Plastics Treaty can:
  - Bridge lifecycle and chemical gaps
  - Foster coordination with other MEAs
  - Drive global harmonisation and transparency

Dr Thomas Maes

# Questions?

## We are happy to help!

**Thank you for your attention**

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