

Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President of the European Commission
European Commission
B-1049 Brussels, Belgium

Cc: Vice-President Jyrki Katainen, Commissioner for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness; and Commissioner Karmenu Vella, Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

Brussels, 10th July 2017

Open letter: *Rethink Plastic's* summer challenge for the Commission

Dear Vice President Timmermans,

The global NGO community is eagerly awaiting the release of the European Union's Strategy on Plastics in the Circular Economy at the end of this year. This is a key moment to truly tackle our growing plastic pollution problem - an opportunity to cement this Commission's legacy and show global leadership on the circular economy and ocean issues. The Strategy on Plastics comes at a time when citizens of Europe are becoming more and more concerned about the consequences of our plastic usage, and are asking for a responsible plastic era. The success with the Plastic Bags Directive has already shown European citizens and indeed the world what change can be achieved when we rethink issues and work together on concrete policy solutions.

Rethink Plastic is part of the global Break Free From Plastic movement, which consists of over 800 NGOs and millions of citizens worldwide. Collectively, this growing global movement systematically addresses the environmental, economic and social impacts of plastic pollution. Based in Brussels, *Rethink Plastic* brings together seven leading European NGOs, with hundreds of thousands of active groups, supporters and citizens in every EU Member State. Whilst each of the alliance's members has policy and technical expertise from a variety of relevant fields, we have one common aim: a future that is free from plastic pollution.

We recognise the issues stemming from plastics are highly complex, and for this reason strongly support the need for EU legislative action in a number of areas to ensure an effective and harmonized approach. Within the Strategy on Plastics, we expect a timetable for future legislation together with immediate concrete measures under existing policies and tools. We will primarily assess and give feedback on the Commission's final Strategy according to performance in the following three areas:



RETHINK PLASTIC

- **Reduction:** an absolute reduction in our plastic footprint. We cannot recycle our way out of our plastic pollution problem, nor can we solve it by substituting plastic feedstock. In particular, we are looking for legislation that will reduce the use of single-use items, top littered items and microplastics.
- **Redesign:** binding measures to ensure plastics are responsible by design, i.e. designed for longevity, reusability, recyclability, incorporating recycled content and free from toxic substances.
- **Better management:** empower and ensure responsible plastic management by all actors (producers, retailers and municipalities) to achieve maximum collection and recycling within Europe.

In this context, we challenge you to deliver on the following three areas over the summer. Firstly, the process of developing the Strategy on Plastics must be done in a transparent manner and be informed by recommendations from the studies commissioned by your services and the concerns of citizens. Secondly, to engage on a personal level - spend one day plastic-free and tweet pictures of your plastic-free day or of plastic pollution with the hashtag #RethinkPlastic. Your final challenge is to commit to being bold. The Strategy must reform the plastics value chain into a truly circular model, optimising it to end plastic pollution which will require us all to think big, act big and deliver big.

Over the summer, *Rethink Plastic* will work on mobilising the millions of citizens who are already rethinking plastic and channel this energy into support for bold and responsible European solutions. We will also continue to submit concrete policy proposals to your services.

September will be a vital month for all of us as Brussels returns from summer and builds towards publishing an ambitious Strategy on Plastics. We would like to set a date to meet with you in September to introduce *Rethink Plastic* more formally, to discuss our respective summer plastic assignments, and to identify how we can support the Commission going forward. We would also be delighted to present our vision of a future free from plastic pollution at the stakeholder conference the Commission is organising on 26th September.

Yours sincerely,

Delphine Lévi Alvarès
Coordinator of the *Rethink Plastic* Alliance

On behalf of

