



Event Report: CPTPP Environment Committee Public Session

Overview

On October 29, 2024, at 6pm EDT, ECCC hosted the CPTPP Environment Committee’s Public Session on the theme of “**Trade Implications of the Regulation and Management of Plastics.**” The event featured a panel of experts discussing regulatory approaches and their effects on trade dynamics.

The session was well attended with participants from Australia, Canada, Chile, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Singapore, and the United Kingdom (8 out of 12 CPTPP Parties). Notably, there was civil society presence from the Canada-ASEAN Business Council, the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, PepsiCo, and Husky Energy Inc., among others.

Panelists and Presentations

Dhinesh Thanenthirajah

Australia’s Permanent Mission to the WTO

Mr. Thanenthirajah presented an overview of the WTO Dialogue on Plastic Pollution and Environmentally Sustainable Plastic Trade, launched in 2020. He spoke on trade-related measures (TrPMs) such as bans and taxes, discussing their effectiveness in reducing overall waste. Additionally, as part of his Q&A segment, he emphasized the role of multilateral fora in plastics trade towards harmonizing standards universally.

Ieva Baršauskaitė

International Institute for Sustainable Development

Ms. Baršauskaitė delivered a comprehensive presentation on policy measures aimed at reducing plastic pollution and mitigating trade frictions, highlighting pioneering countries in this area. She offered a global overview and compared various plastic products—such as packaging, food-related items, and personal care products—with different types of measures, including bans, technical regulations, import licenses, and subsidies. Additionally, Ms. Baršauskaitė addressed the plastic pollution measures that have raised concerns among WTO members, identifying a total of 21 such measures. She concluded

with recommendations for policymakers, emphasizing the importance of transparency and stakeholder engagement, among other strategies.

Tomás Saieg

Chilean Ministry of Environment

Mr. Saieg presented Chile's single-use products law (Law 21.368), which is designed to protect the environment and minimize waste generation by limiting the distribution of single-use items in food sales establishments. He indicated that it promotes the reuse and certification of single-use plastics and regulates disposable plastic bottles. Notably, the legislation requires retailers to offer and accept returnable bottles, contributing to the reduction of pollution from single-use plastics. Mr. Saieg also emphasized that Chile employs additional measures to combat plastic pollution, including Extended Producer Responsibility initiatives. In his concluding remarks, Mr. Saieg recommended adopting a lifecycle approach to inform better decision-making regarding materials used in various sectors.

Discussion Highlights

The session included a Q&A segment during which panelists addressed questions about the varying definitions of single-use plastics, the regulatory landscape, and the environmental impacts of alternatives to plastic.

- **Impact Assessment:** The panel discussed the impacts of TrPMs, addressing the complexities of comparing environmental footprints across different materials.
- **Regulatory Dynamics:** Concerns were raised about blanket bans potentially promoting harder-to-recycle materials, with panelists agreeing on the need for a nuanced regulatory approach.
- **Information Gaps:** Panelists acknowledged a lack of comprehensive data on single-use plastics and emphasized the importance of collaborative efforts and best practice sharing among nations.
- **Circular Economy:** Discussions included strategies for fostering circular markets and the need for collaboration in developing comprehensive recycling systems.
- **Global Context:** The session highlighted the need to connect plastics regulation with emerging concerns over waste textiles.

The event underscored the interplay between trade and environmental sustainability in the context of plastic management, setting the stage for potential future discussions and collaborations.