

# UN talks on a treaty to end global plastic pollution open in Paris



◀ A man walks on a mountain of plastic bottles as he carries a sack of them to be sold for recycling after weighing them at the dump in the Dandora slum of Nairobi, Kenya, on Dec. 5, 2018. ● BEN CURTIS/AP

A United Nations committee met in Paris Monday to work on what is intended to be a landmark treaty to bring an end to global plastic pollution, but there is little agreement yet on what the outcome should be. The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for

Plastics is charged with developing the first international, legally binding treaty on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. This is the second of five meetings due to take place to complete the negotiations by the end of 2024. At the first meeting, held six

months ago in Uruguay, some countries pressed for global mandates, some for national solutions and others for both. Because it's an extremely short timeline for treaty negotiations, experts say that in this second session it's critical that decisions are made about the objectives

and scope of the text – such as what kind of plastics it will focus on. But that is easier said than done. Over 2,000 participants, including governments and observers, from nearly 200 countries have descended on the meeting hosted at the Paris-based U.N. cultural agency, UNESCO.

One fundamental issue being considered Monday is the system of voting on decisions for each nation, which has already produced lively debate and delays in the plenary sessions that are due to end Friday. Humanity produces more than 430 million tons of

plastic annually, two-thirds of which are short-lived products that soon become waste, filling the ocean and, often, working their way into the human food chain, the United Nations Environment Program said in April. Plastic waste produced globally is set to almost triple by 2060, with about half ending up in landfill and under a fifth recycled, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The treaty could focus on human health and the environment, as desired by the self-named “high ambition coalition” of countries, led by Norway and Rwanda, with limits on plastic production and restrictions on some of the chemicals used in plastics. The coalition is committed to an international, legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution by 2040. It says that this is necessary to protect human health and the environment while helping to restore biodiversity and curb climate change.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### N. Korea informs Japan of 'satellite launch'

AFP – North Korea has informed Japan that it is preparing to launch a satellite as early as this week, Tokyo announced Monday but warned it may actually be a sanctions-defying ballistic missile test. North Korea informed Japan that it will launch a rocket between May 31 and June 11, identifying waters near the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea and to the east of Luzon Island in the Philippines as warning areas, a Japanese coast guard spokesman told AFP.

### Spanish PM calls early general election

AP – Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez on Monday called an early general election for July 23 in a surprise move after his Socialist party took a serious battering in local and regional elections. Prior to Sunday's debacle, Sánchez had insisted that he would ride out his four-year term with leftist government coalition partner United We Can, indicating that an election would be held in December.

### Sweden, Turkey to hold NATO discussions

REUTERS – The foreign ministers of Sweden and Turkey will meet “soon” to discuss Stockholm's delayed bid to join NATO, the Swedish Foreign Ministry said on Monday. Sweden and Finland applied for NATO membership following Russia's “military operation” in Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022. However, while Finland joined the Western military alliance in April, Sweden's bid has been held up by objections from Turkey and Hungary.

## Israeli forces kill Palestinian officer in clashes: Wafa



◀ Israeli settlers walk past construction machinery after structures were erected for a new Jewish seminary school in the settler outpost of Homesh in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, on May 29, 2023. ● RONEN ZVULUM/REUTERS

Israeli forces killed a Palestinian security officer during clashes in the occupied West Bank flashpoint city of Jenin on Monday, the official Pales-

tinian news agency Wafa said. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah party identified the officer as Ashraf Sheikh Ibrahim, say-

ing he had died “as he confronted the aggression and the occupation's storming of the city of Jenin,” Reuters reported. The Israeli military said it was looking into the report. Earlier it said in a statement that its forces came under heavy Palestinian fire while seeking the ar-

rest of security suspects in Jenin and returned fire at the gunmen. In another part of the West Bank on Monday, Israeli settlers inaugurated a seminary in an area that has been a focus of U.S. scrutiny, drawing Palestinian condemnation. In a video posted on social media, settler leader Yossi Dagan recited a Jewish benediction at the entrance to the Homesh seminary school, a large white prefabricated shack at the top of a West Bank hill. “With God's help ... there will be many more new settlements in northern Samaria,” he said, referring to the West Bank by its biblical name. U.S.-led peace talks aimed

at establishing a Palestinian state in the West Bank, East Al-Quds and Gaza broke down in 2014 and show little sign of revival, and Israeli-Palestinian violence has escalated over the past year. Most countries deem Israel's settlements illegal.

### Condemnations not enough

Abbas said Homesh must be removed. “Statements of condemnation are no longer enough in the face of the (Israeli) extremist right-wing government,” said his spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeineh. In a bid to quell international concern, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said that Israel has no

intention of building any new settlements as his nationalist-religious government has vowed to bolster existing ones. Spokespeople for Netanyahu, Defence Minister Yoav Gallant and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich did not immediately respond to Reuters requests for comment on whether any of them had authorized the establishment of the new Homesh seminary. Last week, Smotrich, who heads the pro-settler Jewish Zionism party and holds some West Bank powers, said Homesh had been officially added to settlement council land in order to work out a new building plan for the seminary school.

## What was ...

The third factor is his Justice and Development Party (AKP), which [Page 1 >](#) has managed to maintain the social status of the party and Erdogan himself during the past 20 years. Erdogan's alliance with Turkish nationalists, the Nationalist Movement Party, which started in 1988, is the fourth reason for the victory of the current president. The alliance moved nationalism in Turkey in favor of Erdogan. And Erdogan's use of all the necessary tools, such as government facilities, great media power, and the support of large economic complexes was the last factor in his triumph.

### Powerful, resilient president

Dolatabadi has attributed Erdo-

gan's triumph to his display of unwavering strength and stability, citing these qualities as vital within Turkey's historical system of governance. According to Dolatabadi, Erdogan's challenger, Kilicdaroglu, lacked the requisite fortitude to assume the presidency. The former diplomat argues, “Given the precarious circumstances prevailing in Turkey in recent years, the people faced a significant risk in electing an inexperienced figure such as Kilicdaroglu to lead the country. Had the former mayor of Istanbul been given the green light to run, it is plausible that Erdogan's opposition would have emerged victorious.” He further notes, “Turkey grapples with unresolved issues that hinge on Erdogan's specific perspectives, rendering it arduous for the Turkish nation to alter its course under these circumstances.”

The developments in Syria, the Kurds, Iraq, Greece, the Caucasus, and certain stances related to Iran need a leader with Erdogan's qualifications to assume power again and ultimately address these concerns, the former envoy pointed out.

### Erdogan ready to reconsider policies

In light of Erdogan's triumph, coupled with his supporting coalition's control over the majority of parliament, the question arises: Does this mean the president will encounter no challenges in advancing his policies? Dolatabadi responds to this question with a negative stance, asserting that Erdogan will indeed have to grapple with hurdles, including an ongoing economic crisis and foreign policy matters over the next five years. Citing the continuous devaluation

of the lira, which plunged even further during the election campaign, Dolatabadi emphasizes the necessity for Erdogan to orchestrate a comprehensive economic plan to stabilize the situation. Failure to do so may result in a gradual shift of the same majority that supported him toward the opposing camp. The former ambassador adds that security concerns and foreign policy dilemmas have also presented daunting circumstances for Erdogan, such as the imperative to foster a relative understanding with the Kurds and put into force a military withdrawal from Syria. According to Dolatabadi, Erdogan must be prepared to undertake substantial revisions in his policies, while ensuring the continued support of neighboring countries, particularly Iran, to successfully navigate through the crises at hand.

### Rising public demands

Kakaei highlights one of Erdogan's primary challenges over the past two decades: The formidable opposition front, which has now united and secured a considerable number of votes. According to Kakaei, the Turkish president faces two distinct challenges. Firstly, there is the pressing economic crisis, which has necessitated numerous promises to the nation. The expectations of voters, such as taming inflation, bolstering the national currency, and effectively managing foreign exchange reserves, now weigh heavily on the shoulders of the incoming government. He further asserts, “Additionally, the mounting demands from the formidable opposition front place a substantial burden on the new government. The upcoming municipal elections next year hold immense significance for both parties. Notably, Kilicdaroglu garnered more votes than Erdogan

in Istanbul and Ankara, where mayors from the opposition front were in power.” According to Kakaei, Turkey finds itself in a novel political and social landscape, thereby necessitating inevitable policy revisions for Erdogan.

### Regional de-escalation

Will Erdogan's triumph expedite the progression of positive developments in the West Asia region, or will it serve as an impediment? Dolatabadi holds an optimistic perspective, asserting, “Regional countries exhibit a propensity for cooperation, and with Syria's return to the Arab League, the pressure on Turkey to withdraw from Syria will intensify.” Taking into account Turkey's collaborative endeavors with Saudi Arabia and the UAE, as well as its attempts to normalize relations with Syria, Erdogan's victory is poised to contribute to the regional de-escalation process.