



POLICY OPTIONS FOR SOLVING THE PLASTIC POLLUTION CRISIS: CRAFTING EFFECTIVE POLICY

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Image: GreenBiz (2023)

OVERVIEW

- 1.The UN Plastics Treaty
- 2.The Policy Process
- 3.Policy Considerations / Context
- 4.Policy Modalities
- 5.Challenges and Considerations
- 6.Future Directions and Innovations
- 7.Activity



THE UN PLASTICS TREATY



The UN Plastics Treaty

Purpose

An international agreement aimed at combating plastic pollution through global cooperation.

Key Goals

Reduction in Plastic Pollution:
Aim to decrease global plastic production and consumption

Sustainable Practices:
Promote sustainable production and consumption patterns

Support for Developing Countries:
Provide financial and technical support to help developing countries manage plastic waste.

Impact on Global Policy

The treaty is expected to influence national policies and drive global standards for plastic waste management.

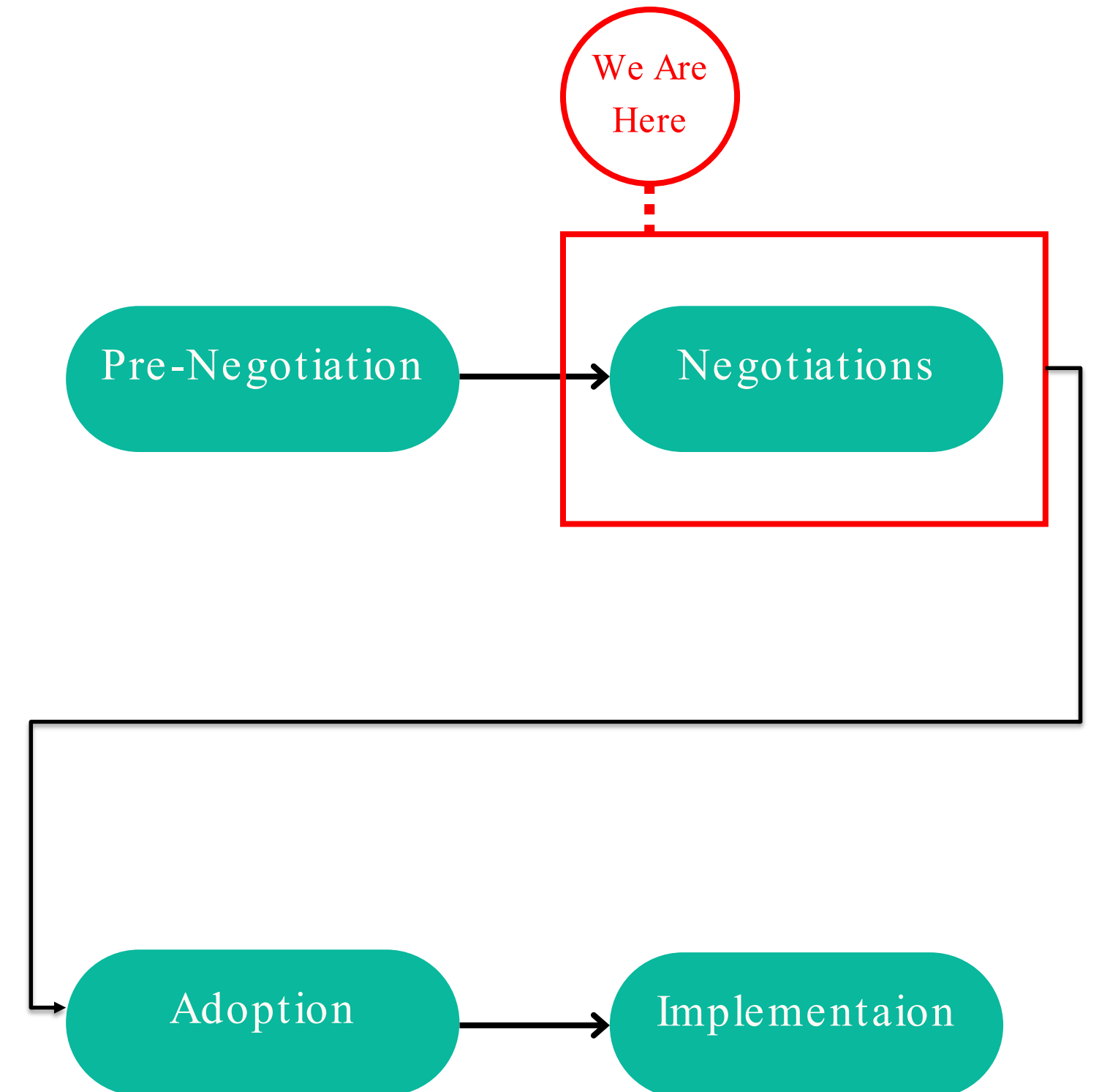


Assessment of Actors & Treaty Negotiation Process

	High Ambition Actors	Low Ambition Actors
Definition	Countries and stakeholders advocating for a strong, legally binding treaty with strict measures to curb plastic production and waste.	Countries favouring a more flexible, voluntary approach, emphasizing national sovereignty and economic considerations.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Union • Japan • Small Island Developing States (SIDS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United States • Petroleum Producing Nations
Key Differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have focused on global, enforceable standards • Targeting a legally binding treaty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritised national interests, like economic growth • And national sovereignty for implementation

Negotiation Dynamics

The push and pull between these groups shape the final content and strength of the treaty.



Implications of a Legally Binding Treaty

“Developed” Countries

Regulatory Changes

Implementation of stricter environmental regulations, including bans on certain plastics and requirements for recycling.

Economic Impact

Potential costs associated with transitioning to sustainable practices, balanced by long-term savings and environmental benefits.

Innovation Opportunities

Increased focus on developing and adopting alternative materials and technologies.

“Developing” Countries

Implementation Challenges

Need for significant investment in infrastructure and capacity building to meet treaty obligations.

Financial Support

International aid and funding mechanisms to support compliance.

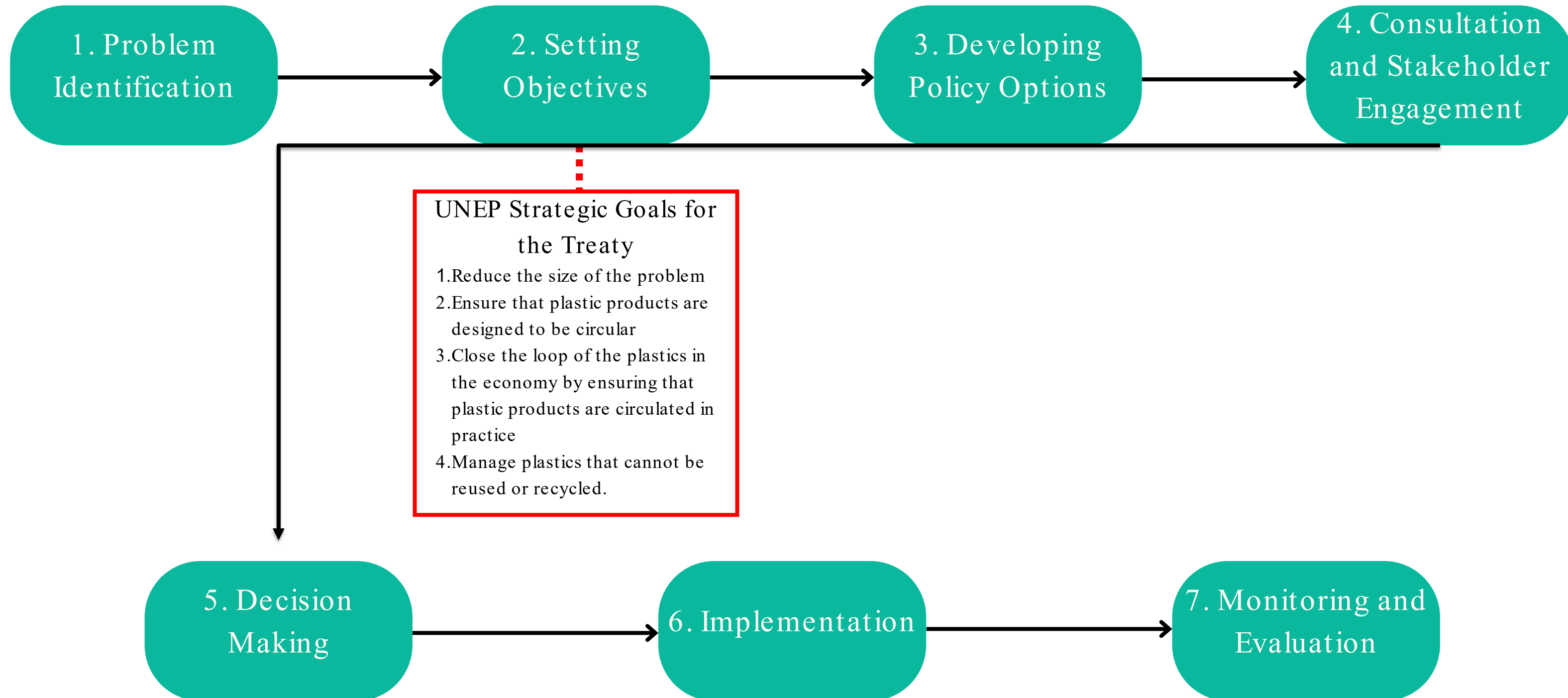
Technological Assistance

Access to technology and expertise from developed nations to improve waste management systems.



THE POLICY PROCESS

The Policy Formulation Process





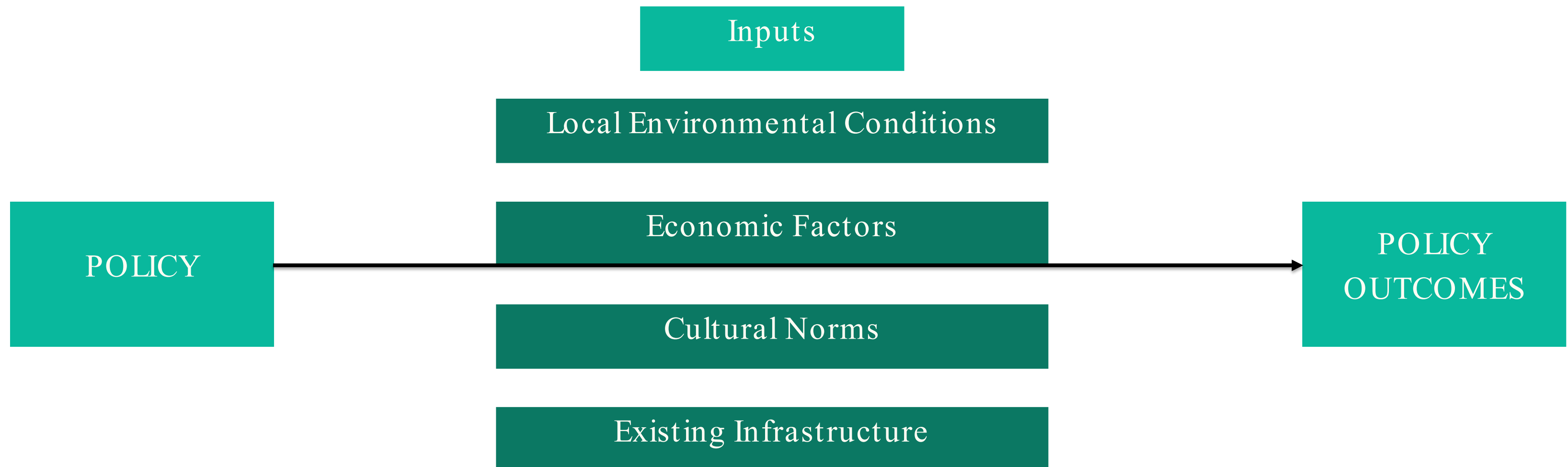
CONSIDERATIONS

Influence on policy outcomes

Local environmental conditions, economic factors, cultural norms, existing infrastructure, and legal frameworks influence policies' effectiveness and sustainability.

Tailored approaches

Policies must be adapted to specific challenges and opportunities of the local context to ensure they are both effective and efficient.



Stakeholders in Policy Development

Role of Stakeholders

Stakeholders bring diverse perspectives, specialized knowledge, and resources, enhancing the legitimacy and success of policies.

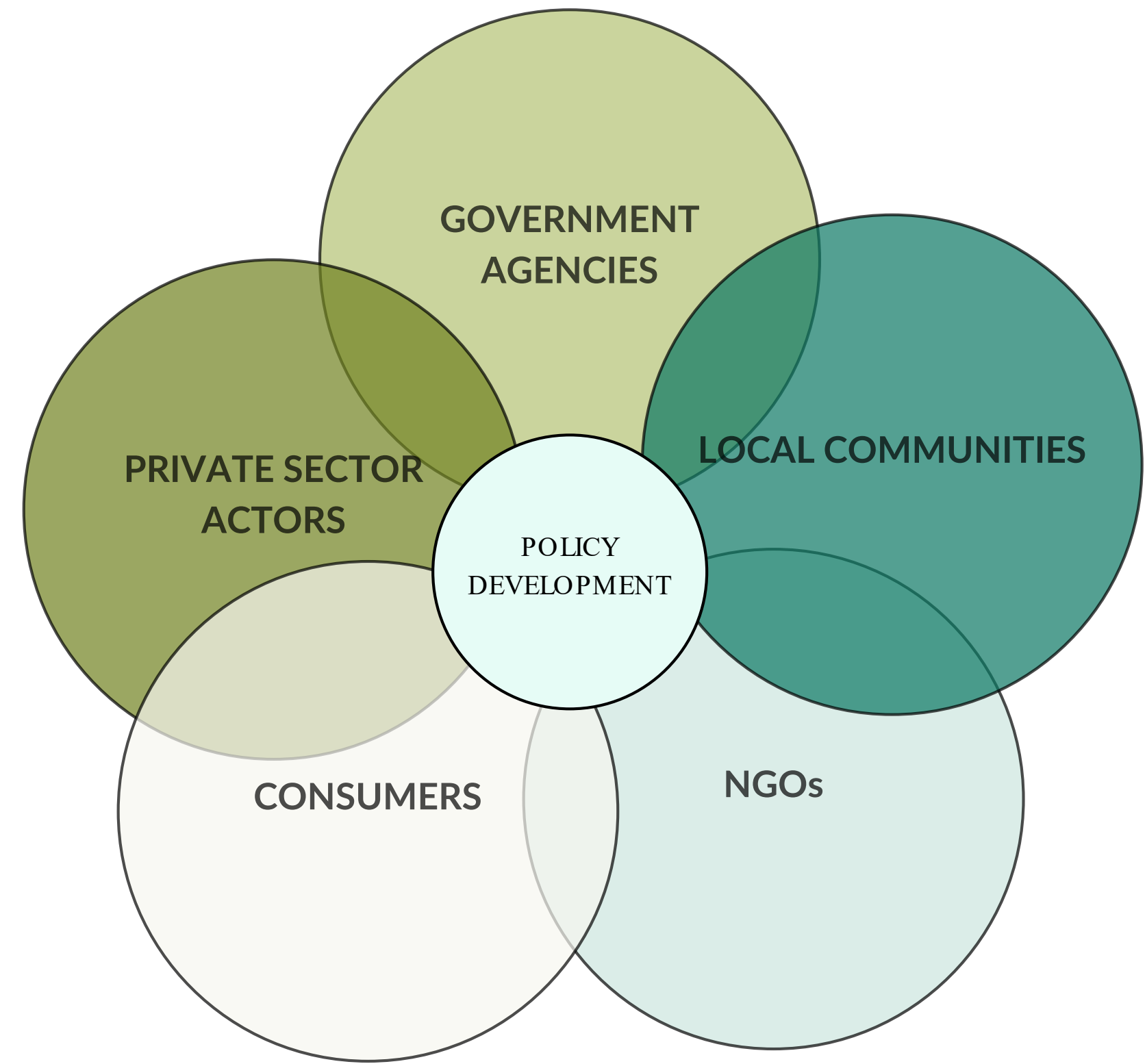
Definition

Stakeholders include any individual, group, organization, or entity with an interest in, is affected by, or can influence the outcomes of the treaty's implementation.

Stakeholders can be involved in plastic production, consumption, waste management, policymaking, or advocacy.

Early Engagement

Helps identify potential issues, build partnerships, and ensure broad support.



Common But Differentiated Responsibility (CBDR)

Overview

While all nations share a common responsibility to protect the environment, their levels of responsibility differ based on their unique circumstances.

Importance of CDBR

Developed Countries

Expected to provide:

- Technology Transfer
- Financial Resources
- Capacity-Building Support

Developing Countries

Focus on:

- enhancing capabilities with international support

Applications for the UN Plastics Treaty

Financial and Technical Assistance

Tailored Contributions

Balancing Equity and Effectiveness



POLICY MODALITIES

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)

Definition

Makes producers responsible for the entire lifecycle of their products, shifting the burdens of waste management from governments to producers.

Types of EPR

- Mandatory Programmes
- Voluntary Programmes
- Product Take-Back Schemes
- Deposit-Refund Schemes



Image: Product Stewardship Institute

Definition

Taxes and levies reduce plastic consumption by making plastic products more expensive, incentivising sustainable alternatives.

Types of Plastic Taxes and Levies

- Direct Pricing
- Revenue Generation
- Market Signals

Case Study: UK Plastic Packaging Tax



Overview:

- Launched April 2022
- Imposes a £200 per ton tax on plastic packaging that contains less than 30% recycled material
- Aims to reduce the use of virgin plastics
- Aims to encourage the use of recycled content in packaging

Impact:

- The tax has driven higher demand for recycled plastics as companies seek to avoid the tax.

Challenges:

- Sourcing a sufficient supply of recycled plastic
- Increased costs for businesses may lead to higher consumer prices.

Sources: HM Revenue & Customs. (2022). Introduction of the Plastic Packaging Tax.

Environmental Audit Committee. (2022). Impact of the UK Plastic Packaging Tax.

Image: The Guardian. (2018)

Definition

Bans and restrictions aim to reduce the production and consumption of single-use plastics, decreasing their environmental impact.

Environmental Impact

Reducing marine debris and plastic waste

Waste Management Impact

Alleviates pressure on waste systems by reducing difficult-to-recycle items.

Case Study: Kenya's Plastic Bag Ban



Overview:

- Launched August 2017
- Kenya introduced a strict ban on the production, sale, and use of plastic bags, with heavy fines for violators.

Impact:

- Significant reduction in plastic pollution, especially in urban areas and waterways.
- Widespread adoption of alternatives like cloth and paper bags.

Challenges:

- Ensuring compliance, particularly in rural areas, remains challenging.
- The ban impacted small businesses and informal workers dependent on plastic bags.

Sources: UNEP. (2018). Kenya's Plastic Bag Ban: A Global Model?

BBC News (2017). Kenya Brings in the World's Toughest Plastic Bag Ban.

Image: Sustainability Middle East & Africa Magazine

Global Nature of Plastic Pollution

- Plastic pollution is a transboundary issue
- Due to the global nature of the problem, international collaboration is crucial.
- Effective plastic pollution mitigation requires coordinated efforts that transcend national boundaries.

Key International Agreements

The UN Plastics Treaty (currently under negotiations)

The Basel Convention

- Aimed at regulating the transboundary movements of hazardous wastes
- Now includes provisions for certain types of plastic waste (particularly the export of plastic waste)
- Helps prevent the dumping of plastic waste in countries with less capacity to manage it.

The Ocean Plastics Charter

- Commits signatory countries to a set of actions aimed at reducing plastic pollution in the oceans.
- Voluntary, but coordinated effort among some of the world's most industrialised nations to address marine plastic pollution.
- Charter has led to increased investment in research, particularly in developing new materials and tech.

Benefits of International Agreements

- Shared Resources and Knowledge:
 - Pooling Resources
 - Global Expertise
- Coordinated Action:
 - Unified Strategies
 - Global Solidarity
- Establishing Global Standards:
 - Level Playing Field
 - Harmonization of Regulation

Challenges of International Collaborations

- Diverging Interests:
 - Economic Priorities
 - Negotiation Complexities
- Compliance and Enforcement:
 - Monitoring and Enforcement
 - Resource Constraints
- Funding and Support:
 - Financial and Technical Assistance
 - Equity Considerations

Definition & Concept

- An economic model that emphasises the continual use of resources by creating closedloop systems
- Contrasts with the traditional linear economy.

Key Point

- The goal of the CE is minimise waste, reduce consumption of finite resources, and keep products and materials in use for as long as possible.
- Plastic pollution: reducing the need for new plastic production and maximising the value extracted from existing plastic materials

Key Principles

- Design Out Waste and Pollution
- Keep Products and Materials in Use
- Regenerate Natural Systems

Circular Economy and Plastic Pollution

- Product Redesign
- Advanced Recycling Technologies
- Extended Product Lifespan
- Waste-to-Resource Initiatives
- Considering the Full Life Cycle of Plastic

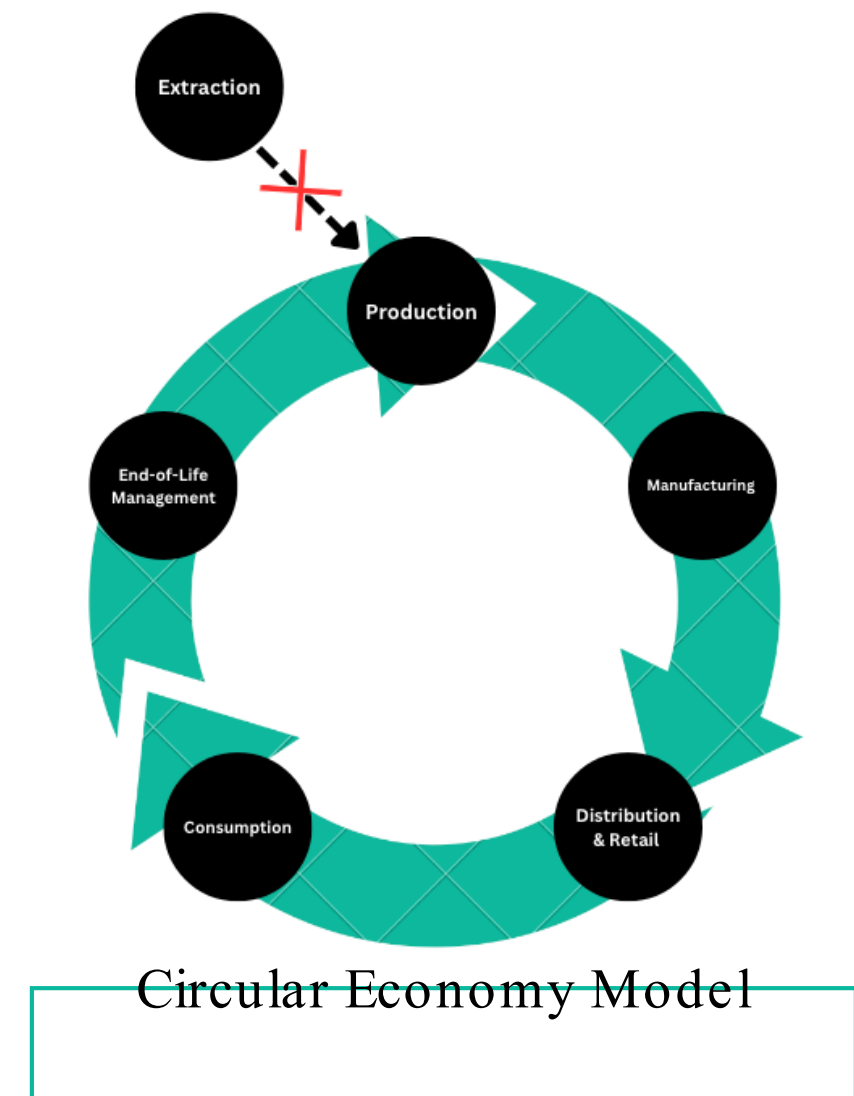
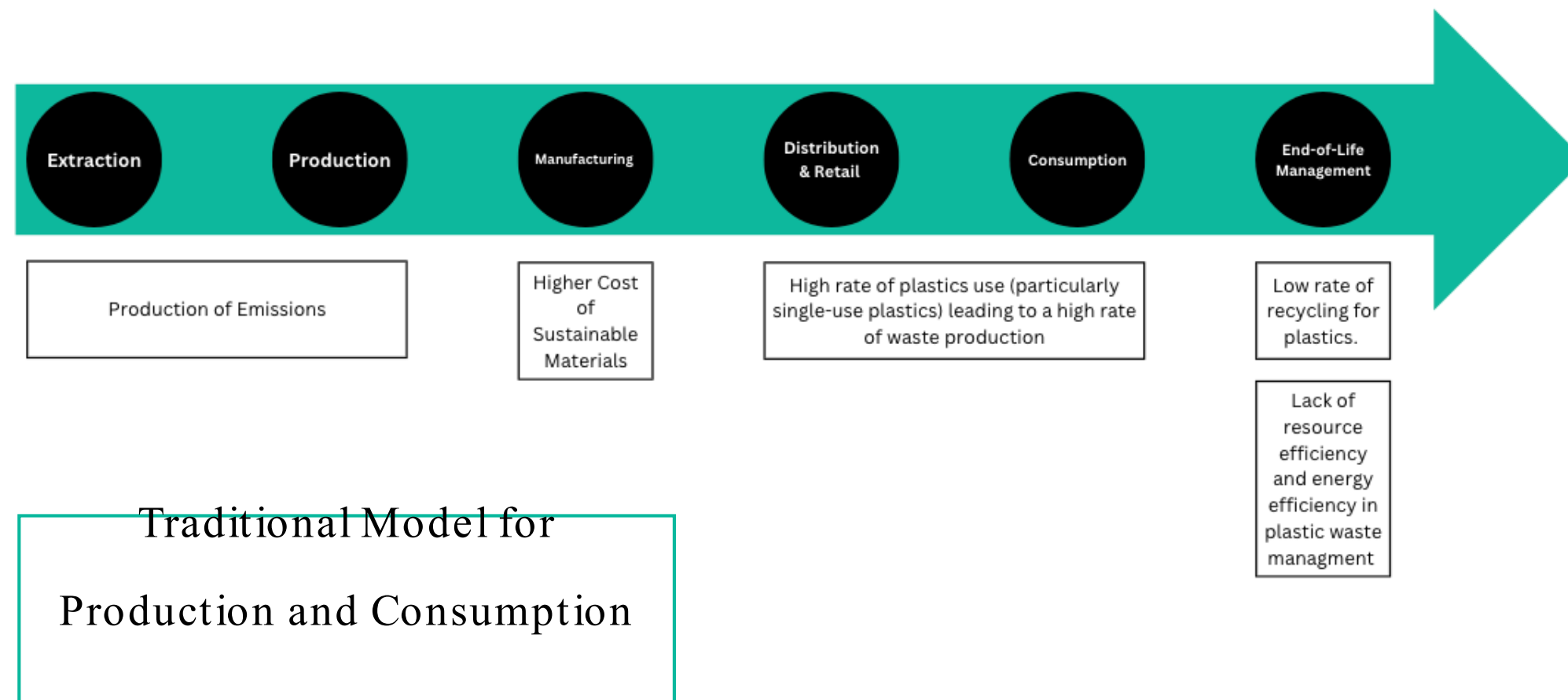
Circular Economy Initiatives

Challenges

- Systemic Change
- Infrastructure Development
- Consumer Behaviour

Opportunities

- Economic Benefits
- Environmental Gains
- Innovation and New Business Models



Challenges and Barriers to Policy Implementation

Key Challenges

- **Financial Constraints:** Limited resources for waste management and recycling infrastructure.
- **Political Will:** Competing interests and inconsistent support can weaken policies.
- **Public Resistance:** Resistance to changes in consumer behaviour requires effective education campaigns.
- **Enforcement and Compliance:** Ensuring compliance is difficult, especially in countries with limited government capacity.
- **Economic Impact:** Industries reliant on plastic may resist regulations due to market concerns, leading to watered-down policies.
- **Cultural Norms:** Deeply ingrained behaviours are hard to change, requiring sustained and culturally sensitive approaches.



Policy Prioritisation in Plastic Legislation

Key Points

Focus on High-Impact Areas	Prioritise policies targeting high-impact areas, such as single-use plastics, to maximise effectiveness
Gradual Implementation	Implement policies gradually to allow market and stakeholder adaptation.
Data-Driven Decisions	Use data to inform prioritisation and involve stakeholders to ensure practicality and broad support.



Case Study: European Union's Approach

Overview:

- EU adopted directive aimed at reducing the environmental impact of certain plastics (2019)
- Part of a broader strategy to transition to a circular economy and combat marine litter.

Key Components:

- Focused on high-impact single-use plastic items that are commonly found in marine litter, such as plastic straws, cutlery, plates, etc.
- Banned the sale of the most problematic single-use plastic items for which alternatives are readily available.
- For other items, the directive set specific reduction targets and mandated better waste management practices.
- EU allowed a transition period, giving businesses time to adapt -- mitigating potential economic disruption.

Impact:

- A reduction in single-use plastics, decreasing the amount of plastic waste entering the environment.
- Provides clear signals to the market, encouraging innovation.
- Sets a strong global example.

Source: European Commission (2019). Directive (EU) 2019/904 on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environments.

Image: United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Future Directions and Innovations

Key Points	
Upstream Interventions	Shift towards source reduction alongside traditional waste management strategies.
Circular Economy Models	Adopt circular economy principles to keep materials in use and design out waste.
Alternative Materials	Develop and promote the use of alternatives to conventional plastics.
Digital Tools	Integrate digital tools for more effective waste management and monitoring.

Role of Policy	
Incentivising Source Reduction	Encourage businesses to reduce plastic use at the source.
Promoting Research and Development	Support the development of sustainable alternatives through grants and subsidies.
Mandating Systems	Implement mandatory systems like Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) to ensure producers are accountable for the entire lifecycle of their products.
Setting Standards	Create clear, consistent standards to drive innovation and sustainable practices.

Activity: Stakeholder Mapping and Engagement

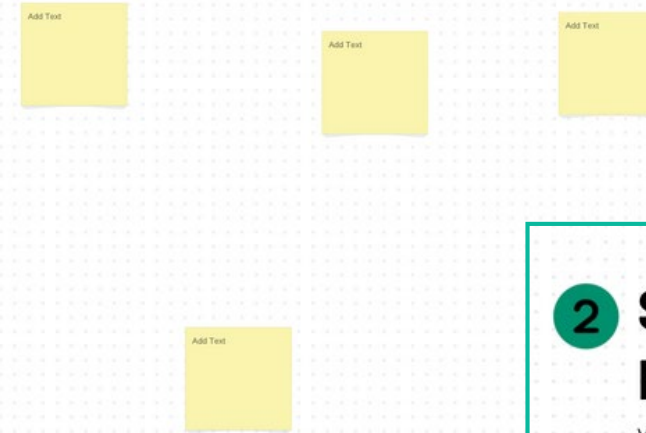
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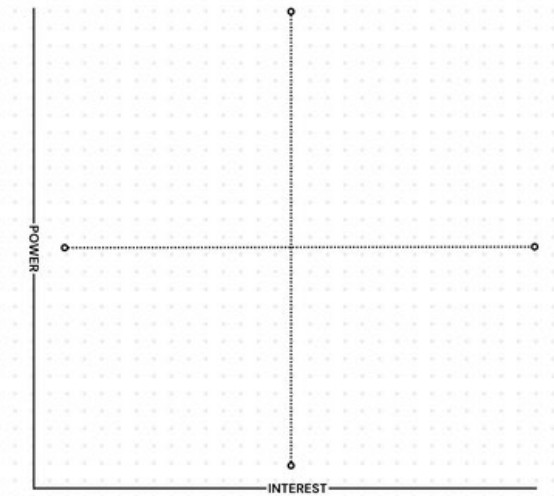
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1 List All Relevant Stakeholders



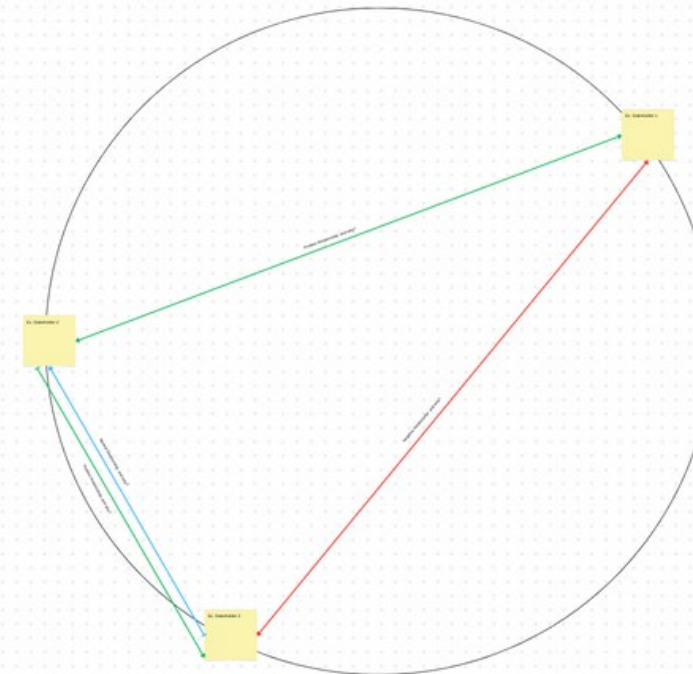
2 Stakeholder Map 1

Visualize the authority and impact of your project's stakeholders on the **Power-Interest Matrix** so we know how to prioritize and manage insights



3 Stakeholder Map 2

Visualize the authority and impact of your project's stakeholders on the **Ecosystem Map** so we can understand how stakeholders are related to each other and how these relationships can aid or hinder project implementation.



Thank You

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