



Joseph R. Biden Jr.
President-elect of the United States
Office of the Presidential Transition
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

December 30, 2020

Dear President-elect Biden:

I am pleased to offer my warmest congratulations to you and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris on your election. We at Recology share your commitment to confronting climate change. Specifically, we share your views that steps must be taken to combat the planet's plastic pollution crisis and protect vulnerable communities around the world.¹ To that end, Recology strongly urges you and your incoming administration to strengthen existing global governance structures to address the plastic pollution crisis by finalizing the U.S. ratification of The Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal (Basel Convention) by working with Congress to introduce and pass implementing legislation for the Basel Convention and Basel Ban to end the export of plastic wastes (including for "recycling") to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries.

The United States of America had the distinction of being the largest generator of plastic waste of any country in the world in 2016.² In the years that followed, global policy and markets began a shift away from importing low-value plastic waste to be processed and used as raw material for the creation of new products. In 2017, the People's Republic of China (China) announced an import ban on a variety of recycled plastic materials, among others, that created a significant reduction in demand for those commodities.³ On January 1, 2021, amendments to the Basel Convention on the classification and control of plastic waste take effect and will impose new prior consent controls and trade bans on the cross-border movement of most types of plastic wastes.

As the U.S. is a non-party to the Basel Convention, most countries will be obligated to prohibit trade in many types of recycled plastics with the U.S.⁴ Since the enactment of China's National Sword Policy and in anticipation of the amendment to the Basel Convention concerning regulation of the global plastic waste trade, the U.S. domestic waste and recycling industry has lost access to international secondary markets for recycled plastic materials and the domestic market has not yet developed the capacity to absorb the current supply. It is crucial that the United States become a party to the Basel Convention so as to not be excluded from the global trade of these valuable materials.

¹ Marshall, J. (2020, January 6). Joe Biden wants to phase out plastic bags. *Energy and Environment News*. Retrieved December 29, 2020, from <https://www.eenews.net/stories/1062010107>

² Law, K. L., Starr, N., Siegler, T. R., Jambeck, J. R., Mallos, N. J., & Leonard, G. H. (2020). The United States' contribution of plastic waste to land and ocean. *Science Advances*, 6(44). doi:10.1126/sciadv.abd0288

³ Editorial Staff. (2020, October 26). From Green Fence to red alert: A China timeline - *Resource Recycling*. Retrieved December 29, 2020, from <https://resource-recycling.com/recycling/2018/02/13/green-fence-red-alert-china-timeline/>

⁴ United States Environmental Protection Agency. New International Requirements for the Export and Import of Plastic Recyclable Waste. Retrieved December 29, 2020, from <https://www.epa.gov/hwgenerators/new-international-requirements-export-and-import-plastic-recyclables-and-waste#howimpact>

Recology is a century's old, employee-owned company managing recycling, organic waste, and solid waste collection, processing and disposal services for nearly 150 urban, suburban and rural communities in California, Oregon and Washington state, and would be honored to work with you and your administration as you develop and implement critical climate change policies.

Though the US is one of just six nations not currently an official member of the Basel Convention, Recology has committed to comply with the Basel Convention Plastic Waste Amendments and no longer export low-grade plastic materials (Mixed Rigid Plastics and Mixed Plastics #3-7) received after January 1, 2021.

Recology is dedicated to socially and environmentally responsible resource recovery practices and will continue to identify opportunities to develop and promote domestic markets for plastic waste. The company's investments over the past several decades showcase this commitment through the consistent procurement of processing technology that improves our ability to recover valuable materials from the waste stream. Recology will continue to prioritize creative, real-world solutions that provide for responsible management of recovered plastics and transparency into the materials recovery process. However, policy action is needed to support these investments made in partnership with our communities to yield meaningful progress on a national and global scale.

Most recently through the California Plastic Pollution Reduction Act, a people's ballot initiative in California, Recology devoted significant resources toward these commitments. The ballot initiative seeks to create a funding mechanism for plastics processing technology improvements in California and implement an enforceable regulatory framework to source reduce single-use plastic products in the state. If passed, this initiative would reduce plastic sold, and restore environments impacted by plastic pollution by holding plastic manufacturers financially responsible for the disposal or end of life of materials they create. It is this kind of producer responsibility policy that Recology will continue to support at the state, regional, and federal level. We urge your administration to do the same; a crucial first step is the ratification of the Basel Convention Plastic Waste Amendments.

We welcome the opportunity to work with you and your administration to continue to supply valuable recycled materials to manufacturers and protect our nation's environment through resource recovery and natural resource conservation to advance the fight against climate change. We cannot stand idly by while nations across the globe work together to find a sustainable solution to the plastics crisis. We ask that your administration work alongside Congress to be part of the solution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Sangiacomo". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Michael Sangiacomo
Chief Executive Officer
Recology