

INC5.2 Global Summit in Geneva: A Strategic Arena for Iran in Environmental Diplomacy and Petrochemical Industry Defense

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The INC5.2 global summit in Geneva, aimed at drafting a legally binding international instrument to combat plastic pollution, was not merely an environmental event for Iran—it was a multilayered diplomatic arena. The active presence of the Iranian delegation and the statements made by Dr. Hassan Abbaszadeh, Deputy Minister of Petroleum and CEO of the National Petrochemical Company, demonstrated that Iran views this summit as a strategic opportunity to safeguard its national interests across industry, politics, environment, and international law.

Let us examine the opportunities this summit provided for Iran and how Dr. Abbaszadeh's remarks were crafted to capitalize on them:

1. Opportunity to Influence the Global Instrument Before Finalization

The INC document is set to become a legally binding framework obligating countries in the production, consumption, and disposal of plastics. Iran's active participation in the drafting phase allows it to:

- Prevent the inclusion of clauses that could harm its petrochemical industry
- Align the document's provisions with its economic and industrial realities
- Avoid the imposition of unfair obligations on developing countries

Dr. Abbaszadeh emphasized “plastic consumption management” rather than “production restrictions,” steering the document toward practical and balanced solutions.

2. Defending Iran's Petrochemical Industry Against Global Restrictions

Iran is one of the region's major exporters of polymer materials. If the INC document limits the production or

export of these materials, the country's economy could suffer. Dr. Abbaszadeh's statements were highly targeted:

- He stressed that essential technologies and products must not be restricted
- He called for a focus on the end-of-life phase of plastics, not initial production
- He invoked the CBDR principle (Common But Differentiated Responsibilities) to ensure fair distribution of obligations



These positions reflect a smart defense of Iran's petrochemical value chain without overtly opposing the summit's environmental goals.

3. Using the Global Platform to Raise Geopolitical Issues

Dr. Abbaszadeh, in part of his speech, described the attacks by Israel and the United States on Iran's civilian infrastructure as threats to the environment and public health. This move served multiple purposes:

- Drawing global attention to the environmental consequences of war and aggression
- Framing political grievances within legal and ethical contexts
- Enhancing Iran's legitimacy in international forums through the shared language of environmental concern

This tactic elevated Iran from a defensive posture to a proactive, rights-claiming stance—without direct political confrontation.

4. Building Consensus with Like-Minded Countries Against Western Pressure

Iran, alongside countries like Russia and Saudi Arabia, opposed certain proposed clauses—particularly those suggesting restrictions on plastic supply. This alignment enabled the formation of a negotiating bloc that could:

- Defend the interests of plastic-producing nations
- Resist Western pressure to curtail production
- Demand financial support for developing countries

Abbaszadeh reinforced this consensus by emphasizing “sustainable industrial development and livelihoods.”

5. Opportunity to Advance Green Technologies and Knowledge-Based Exports

Through participation in the INC process, Iran can pave the way for developing environmentally friendly technologies:

- Production of biodegradable polymers
- Attraction of foreign investment in green technology sectors
- Export of technical expertise to regional and Global South countries

By stressing the need for a “scientific, operational, and fair instrument,” Abbaszadeh signaled Iran's readiness to innovate—provided the final document does not hinder technological progress.

6. Strengthening Iran's Position in Global Environmental Negotiations

The cohesive Iranian delegation—comprising representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Petroleum, Industry, Environment, and the Polymer Association—demonstrated Iran's organized approach to negotiations. This presence:

- Enhances Iran's credibility in environmental forums
- Facilitates engagement with international institutions

- Opens pathways for joint projects and access to technical and financial assistance

Abbaszadeh's appreciation of the INC Secretariat further reinforced this collaborative tone.

Strategic Summary

Dr. Abbaszadeh's speech at INC5.2 was a multilayered statement that simultaneously addressed:

Dimension	Objective and Opportunity
Industrial	Defending petrochemical production and exports; avoiding global restrictions
Environmental	Participating in drafting the global instrument with focus on consumption management and end-of-life plastics
Political	Framing military attacks on Iran as environmental and humanitarian threats
Diplomatic	Building consensus with like-minded countries and strengthening Iran's negotiation stance
Technological	Facilitating green innovation and knowledge-based exports
Legal	Applying the CBDR principle to ensure fair distribution of obligations

Although the summit has not yet reached a final agreement, it presented Iran with a golden opportunity to shape future global regulations on plastics and secure its strategic interests.

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