## Nations gather for plastic treaty talks

## Kenya summit is 3rd of 5, with year-end deal a goal

**Jennifer McDermott** and Carlos Mureithi

ASSOCIATED PRESS

NAIROBI, Kenya - Efforts to create a landmark treaty to end global plastic pollution were advancing Monday in Nairobi as most of the world's nations, plus petrochemical companies, environmentalists and others affected by the pollution, gathered to discuss draft language for the first time.

It's the third gathering in a compressed five-meeting schedule intended to complete negotiations by the end of next year.

"The urgency of addressing plastic pollution cannot be overstated," said Gustavo Adolfo Meza-Cuadra Velasquez, chair of the negotiating committee, at the headquarters of the United Nations Environment Program in Nairobi. "To bring a difference at the scale required, we must work collectively."

Kenya's president, William Ruto, called the treaty "the first domino" in a shift away from plastic pollution.

But the negotiations have been strained by concerns over delays in discussing the plastics issue at hand. In the last round of talks in Paris, talks stalled for about two days as some countries hampered discussions.

The power dynamics and positions of different delegations became clear in the first two rounds of talks in Paris and Punta del Este, Uruguay. They echo some of the same positions as in international climate talks, and with good reason - many of the players are the same. Plastic is largely made from crude oil and natural gas, giving oil-producing countries and companies a large stake in any treaty.

Global negotiators last met in Paris in June and agreed to produce initial treaty text before reconvening in Nairobi. The draft was published in early September. The U.N. Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution is charged with developing the first international, legally binding treaty on plastic pollution on land and at sea.



Plastic waste covers the Badhwar Park beach on the Arabian Sea coast in Mumbai, India, in June. The global effort to agree on a plastic pollution treaty has experienced delays. RAJANISH KAKADE/AP FILE

Kenya is a global leader in fighting plastic pollution, and in 2017, the country banned the manufacture, sale and use of single-use plastic bags. In what is one of the strictest bans on the products, lawbreakers face fines and up to four years in jail.

Two years later, Kenya banned single-use plastic like cutlery, straws and PET bottles from parks, forests, beaches and other protected areas. Kenya is also an important player in environmental matters as home to UNEP's headquarters. The country generates more than 70% of its electricity from renewable

Norway and Rwanda are leading a "high ambition coalition" of governments that want to end plastic pollution by 2040 by cutting production and limiting some chemicals used in making plastics.

The two countries issued a ministerial joint statement this month calling for an ambitious and effective treaty to protect human health and the environment from plastic pollution by addressing the full life cycle of plastics. They expressed "deep concern" about significant increases in plastic production, plastic litter and greenhouse gas emissions. Plastic production is forecast to triple by 2060, according to UNEP.

Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, is leading a group of countries that have large petroleum industries and prefer to focus on recycling and waste manage-

On Saturday, Iran announced a coalition with Saudi Arabia, China, Russia and other countries with large petrochemical industries to advocate for the treaty to the focus on waste control, rather than the entire life cycle of plastics as agreed last year, raising concerns from environmentalists.

"It is unfortunate that a handful of governments are putting the short-term interests of petrochemical companies ahead of the health of the planet and their own citizens," Graham Forbes, global campaign lead for Greenpeace, said. "World leaders have committed to develop a binding treaty that addresses the full life cycle of plastics, and we expect them to honor that."

Eirik Lindebjerg, global plastics policy lead at the World Wildlife Fund, said those countries are trying "to make this more of a kind of loose voluntary agreement rather than the strong treaty that the clear majority of countries here are pushing for."

The United States' delegation suggests the treaty include some meaningful universal obligations the high-ambi-

tion coalition wants, while also recognizing some national discretion, both because of the differences between countries and because some won't agree to it otherwise.

The draft represents the range of viewpoints shared at the first two meetings. Björn Beeler, international coordinator for the International Pollutants Elimination Network, said it is evident that negotiations have moved beyond plastic waste and into addressing plastic production and toxic chemicals used to make plastic.

Beeler expects the draft to grow more before it shrinks and becomes final, as delegates add in ideas in Nairobi and countries develop their positions. IPEN wants a treaty that addresses the environmental and health issues posed by chemicals in plastics as the products are used, recycled, discarded or burned as

Leaders of the global plastics industry are advocating for a process called chemical or advanced recycling and said they were disappointed the draft doesn't have a strong focus on that.

Environmental groups call it a marketing tactic to distract from real solutions like producing and using less plastic. Beyond Plastics and IPEN issued a report in October that says the process threatens the environment, the climate, human health and environmental jus-

Chemical recycling typically uses heat or chemical solvents to break down plastics into liquid and gas to produce an oil-like mixture or basic chemicals. Industry leaders say that mixture can be made back into plastic pellets to make new products.

Chris Jahn, a spokesperson for the International Council of Chemical Associations, said the draft was a missed opportunity to focus on circularity, rather than on caps and bans that don't address the issue of plastic becoming litter and pollution. He said the groups are working to get chemical recycling add-

"The focus is on ending plastic pollution, not plastic production," he said.

The negotiations, which have attracted more than 2,000 participants, will end Sunday.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Petition to Establish the Lakes at Cocoa Grove Community Development District

DATE: December 12, 2023

TIME: 6:00 p.m., or as soon thereafter as

LOCATION: **Council Chambers** 

65 Stone Street Cocoa, Florida 32922

In compliance with the provisions of Chapter 190, Florida Statutes, a public hearing will be held by the City Council of the City of Cocoa, Florida on the 12th day of December, 2023, at 6:00 p.m., or as soon thereafter as may be heard, at the Council Chambers, 65 Stone Street, Cocoa, 22, to consider an ordinance to grant a petition to establish the Lakes at Cocoa Grove Community Development District. The title of the proposed ordinance is as follows:

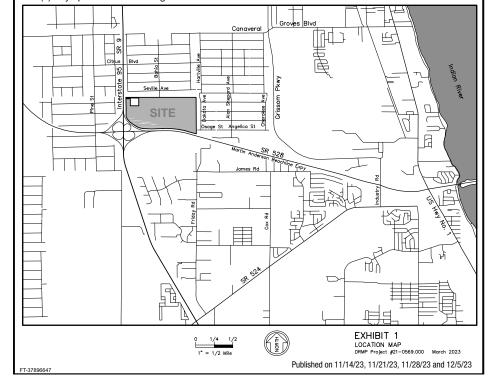
## ORDINANCE NO.

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COCOA, FLORIDA, ESTABLISHING THE LAKES AT COCOA GROVE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT, AT APPROXIMATELY 246.43 ACRES, PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 190, FLORIDA STATUTES; NAMING THE DISTRICT; DESCRIBING THE EXTERNAL BOUNDARIES OF THE DISTRICT; DESCRIBING THE FUNCTIONS AND POWERS OF THE DISTRICT; DESIGNATING FIVE PERSONS TO SERVE AS THE INITIAL MEMBERS OF THE DISTRICT'S BOARD OF SUPERVISORS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

The proposed Community Development District is comprised of 246.43 acres, generally located at the northeast corner of the State Road 528 and I-95 Interchange. The petitioner has proposed to establish the Lakes at Cocoa Grove Community Development District to plan, finance, acquire, construct, operate and maintain infrastructure and community facilities which may be authorized by such District under Florida law, including but not limited to: stormwater management system, roadway improvements, water and sewer systems, recreation improvements, landscaping and signage, and other infrastructure.

Copies of the petition and proposed ordinance are open to public inspection at the Community Services Department, 65 Stone Street, Cocoa, Florida 32922. All interested persons and affected units of general-purpose government shall be given an opportunity to appear at the hearing and present oral or written comments on the petition. Any persons or affected unit of general-purpose local government who wish to appeal any decision made by the Board with respect to any matter considered at this public hearing will need a record of the proceedings. For that purpose, the person or unit of general-purpose local government may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made that includes the testimony and evidence upon which the

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 286.26, Florida Statutes, if you are a person with a disability who needs any accommodation in order to participate in this proceeding, you are entitled, at no cost to you, to the provision of certain assistance. Please contact the City Clerk at 65 Stone Street, Cocoa, Florida 32922, or by phone at (321) 433-8480 not less than seventy-two (72) hours before a hearing or meeting in order to make arrangements Hearing impaired persons, please call the Florida Relay Service (1-800-955-8770), no later than five (5) days prior to the meeting.



## Army mourns 5 US troops killed in helicopter crash

**Tara Copp** 

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Army Special Operations Command on Monday identified the five Army aviation special operations forces killed when their helicopter crashed in the eastern Mediterranean over the weekend, calling each a "national treasure" whose loss cut deeply.

The military's European Command said the UH-60 helicopter went down during an air refueling mission as part of military training.

The five service members who died were Chief Warrant Officer 3 Stephen R. Dwyer, 38, of Clarksville, Tennessee; Chief Warrant Officer 2 Shane M. Barnes, 34, of Sacramento, California; Staff Sgt. Tanner W. Grone, 26, of Gorham, New Hampshire; Sgt. Andrew P. Southard, 27, of Apache Junction, Arizona; and Sgt. Cade M. Wolfe, 24, of Mankato, Minnesota. They were all part of the Army's 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment based at Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

The commander of the Army Special Operations Command, Lt. Gen. Jonathan Braga, said the fallen soldiers "hail from rare patriotic families with deep military service ties that span multiple generations and formations."

"This is devastating news that reverberates across the entire Special Operations community," Braga said in a statement Monday. "Every loss is tough, but in this case, service to the Nation is truly a family business and it's hard to express the amount of sorrow that we all feel right now."

The fallen soldiers were highly decorated, with multiple combat deployments in addition to responding to deployments with no notice, sent overseas to respond quickly to various national security needs.

Dwyer received his commission in 2009 from the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, New York. He served as an MH-60M pilot, mission planner and instructor pilot and deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. He was called up multiple times on no-notice deployments to support national security objectives, the Army Special Operations Command said. His awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, the Meritorious Ser-

vice Medal and the Air Medal with Combat device among many others.

Barnes, also an MH-60M pilot, graduated from Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington, in 2011. He was assigned to Korea and completed deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with Valor device and the Air Medal with Combat device among other campaign

Grone enlisted in the Army in 2017 as a UH-60 repairer. He served as a flight instructor and and MH-60M crew chief for the 160th. He deployed to Afghanistan and multiple times to Iraq, and he was awarded the Air Medal with Combat device, the Army Commendation Medal and the Army Achievement Medal with combat device among many other awards.

Grone's parents, Steve and Erica Grone, in a Facebook post verified by The Associated Press, said of their son that they were "beyond proud of what you became and believed in. Thank you for all these amazing years. Please watch over us. Love you and can't express how much you will be missed."

Southard enlisted in the Army in 2015 as a UH-60 repairer and served as an MH-60M crew chief. He was first assigned to Fort Bliss, Texas, upon completing advanced individual training, and he completed a 13-month rotation to Task Force Sinai in support of ongoing peacekeeping operations. He deployed to Afghanistan and was awarded two Army Commendation medals and an Army Achievement medal among other cita-

Wolfe enlisted in the Army in 2018 as a UH-60 repairer and served as an MH-60M crew chief. His awards and decorations include two Army Commendation medals and an Army Achievement medal.

The U.S. has built up its force presence in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East in response to Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on Israel. There are two carrier strike groups operating in the region, U.S. Air Force squadrons have received additional crews and warplanes, and U.S. special operations forces have been added to help Israel in efforts to rescue hostages taken into Gaza.