



**CIVIL SOCIETY POSITION ON PLASTIC POLLUTION,
PRESENTED AT THE NATIONAL EVENT TO MARK THE WORLD
ENVIRONMENT DAY,**

HELD IN MBALE, UGANDA, ON 5TH JUNE 2018

Your Excellency, the President of the Republic of Uganda

We, Civil Society Organizations working to promote the integrity of the environment, are happy about our Government's commitment to celebrate the World Environment Day annually, and for allowing us, since last year in Ibanda, to present our position during this event. The theme for this year's World Environment Day (Beat Plastic Pollution) is of particular significance to us. It comes at a time debate is going on as to what should be the best approach in dealing with the challenge posed by plastic pollution in our country.

In the statement we presented at the 2017 event, we posed a question to Government as to what had happened to the "kaveera" ban. We asked why it was not being enforced. Since then we have focused on dialogue with various stakeholders with the view of finding a durable solution to this problem. We interacted with the Parliament's Committee on Natural Resources, and with manufacturers and recyclers under their umbrella body, the Uganda Plastics Manufacturers and Recyclers Association. We particularly discussed with the Committee on Natural Resources what we thought could be a good law on plastics in Uganda. This we did in view of the ongoing amendment of the National Environment Act. Some of the proposals we gave and would like to reemphasize here today are;

1. The urgency for a full ban on importation and manufacture of all plastic carrier bags in Uganda and effective enforcement of such ban by Government at both national and local levels. The dangers of these carrier bags are numerous. They include consumption by animals, clogging of trenches and pollution of water bodies and farm land. A lot of money is spent annually by urban authorities, such as KCCA, in dealing with the adverse effects of plastics on the drainage system.

2. We note with concern the fact that plastic utensils are widely used in schools and other institutions, and in many homesteads in Uganda. Yet, studies in countries such as India and the United States of America have revealed that when hot substance gets into contact with plastic, the latter releases toxic chemical known as bisphenol A and 45 carcinogens that have been linked to cancer in humans. In light of this, we call on the Ministry of Education and Sports, together with NEMA and Ministry of Health, to issue a directive to all schools and other institutions in the country to desist from serving food in plastic plates, cups and containers, and together with local governments, to intensify public education on the dangers of plastic poisoning.
3. We voice our concern about the fact that despite purported effort by manufactures and recyclers to reprocess plastics, the environment remains littered with this material. Further, it is scientifically proven that many plastics are recyclable, profitably, only three times. We then wonder what happens after they have reached this limit. Could they be the ones we see left uncollected along our roads, streets, drainage systems, farm land and homes? We, therefore, propose that Government, through NEMA, initiates a programme to remove all plastics from the environment, and this should be funded by manufacturers of plastics as required under the "polluter pays" principle. Further, NEMA should develop an audit framework to ascertain the plastic footprint of each manufacturer, bottler and supplier. All plastic manufacturers, bottlers and suppliers should label their bottles and be able to recover them from the environment under the same principle.

We end by reiterating our commitment to working closely with Government as partners, and with other stakeholders, in the effort to rid our country of all forms of plastic pollution. Once again, we thank you, your Excellency, for the opportunity to interact with you on this very important national matter. It is our prayer that, as the Fountain of Honour, you will personally prevail to ensure that there is a healthy balance between the environment and the economic interest of our country.

Delivered by us the organizations whose emblems are embedded here below, under our umbrella organization Climate Action Network Uganda, in partnership with Caritas Uganda, Uganda Episcopal Conference.