



MALAWI GOVERNMENT

MALAWI'S POSITION ON MARINE LITTER AND MICROPLASTICS

Your Excellencies

Distinguished delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to thank the Government of Switzerland for the warm hospitality accorded to us and for co-sponsoring this meeting. Additionally, let me thank the Governments of Norway and Sweden for making available resources for hosting this meeting. Equally, I should commend UNEP for bringing us together at this Second Ad Hoc Open-Ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics.

The issue at hand knows no boundaries especially when we recognize the interconnectedness of land based activities that pollutes rivers and lakes eventually ending up in oceans affecting marine ecosystems. Malawi therefore is convinced that every member state should be given opportunity to contribute in its own way in dealing with this global menace.

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Ladies and Gentlemen

Malawi, as many other developing countries, faces challenges in the management of waste from generation, collection, transportation, treatment to final disposal. These challenges result in problems including water pollution, air pollution, and biodiversity loss. Plastics form approximately 10% of the total wastes.

The impacts of plastic waste on water resources, health and environment in Malawi are being exacerbated by lack of alternatives to plastics, waste management facilities, environmental consciousness, and high population growth.

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Recognizing the negative impact of plastic wastes, the Malawi Government emphasizes the need for proper waste management through the Key Priority Area on Health and Population (MGDS III, 2017). In addition, Government has put in place policies, legislation and programs for sustainable management of the environment and natural resources such as; the National Environmental Policy (2004), Environment Management Act (Cap. 60:02), Environment Management (Plastics) Regulations (2015) and the Environment Management (Waste Management and Sanitation) Regulations (2008). Alignment of the National Development Strategy and UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will enhance the achievement of UN SDG 14 and Commonwealth Blue Charter.

About 70% of the wastes is indiscriminately disposed off. In addition disposal of wastes remains a major challenge as there is a lack of proper and adequate waste management sites. Furthermore, disposal sites in Malawi are not properly designed and managed. These challenges have resulted in plastics finding their way into the environment including water ways and eventually oceans.

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Although there have been a number of efforts to reduce plastic waste in the country (i.e. through the ban on thin plastics and beach cleanup campaign along the lake); behavioral change and lack of awareness, capacity building and recycling of plastics remain common problems in waste management.

Accordingly, priority areas for Malawi remain:

1. Support the Implementation of the ban on thin plastics;
2. Promote recycling of plastic waste- set up and support plastic waste recycling centres;
3. Promotion of alternative packaging for the banned thin plastics;

4. Conduct clean up campaigns in market centers, major rivers and lakes in Malawi;
5. Initiate mind set change to the general public in management of plastic waste; and
6. Enhance the capacity of Town and District councils in management of plastic waste, including
 - Human capacity
 - Infrastructure (land fills, waste receptacles and collection vehicles)

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Malawi believes that whatever options we might propose for UNEA at this meeting, it is important that consideration be given to the different capacities and contexts in respective member states. This will ensure that no one is left behind in this important issue, which by now is an environmental crisis, facing all countries whether landlocked, islands or those facing the ocean.

We would call for relevant support to build capacities for developing countries to properly manage waste. Furthermore, there is need for sharing of necessary technologies to address plastics across the spectrum. In this regard, the role of South-South cooperation as a complimentary and not substitute to North-South cooperation could be called upon.

It is also important that a room is created for indigenous knowledge and innovative solutions to play a role in addressing plastic pollution in general and marine litter in specific. This is for instance, essential in developing alternatives to plastics and waste management respectively but also to link the proposed options to the theme of UNEA 4.

Thank you.