

Rwanda statement

Madam Chair and distinguish delegates,

Rwanda is a land locked country located in the East African Region. Rwanda is well aware of the matter of marine litter and microplastic pollution. Therefore, since 2003 the Ministry of Environment had assessed the problem of plastic in Rwanda. Alarming observations of their negative impacts on sanitation and general cleanliness, human health, agriculture productivity, water drainage systems, cattle health, air quality, water quality were given.

In 2004, a Government decision to ban plastic shopping bags was taken starting with a country wide awareness raising using various channels, mainly community works, media campaigns (TV, radio and print) to educate people on the side effects of the plastics.

Despite all good initiatives taken by Rwanda, some challenges still exist like neighboring countries with no ban of plastics poses a threat while countries are promoting free movement of people and goods.

Some alternatives are still expensive compared to plastics; Illegal business opportunity in the smuggle of banned plastics, pressure by the

business lobby and some industrialists, speculations and unfairness on alternatives (many appellations hard to verify; biodegradable, compostable, degradable, oxo-biodegradable, etc.)

The challenge Rwanda faces today is not plastic bags, but extends to all plastics especially “*single use plastics*”. As we continue to enforce and strengthen the ban, the country is now tackling single use plastics (Plastic bottles, cups, plates, and cutlery).

A review of the plastics ban law to control single use plastics was undertaken, the old law of 2008 on prohibition of manufacturing, importation, use and sale of polythene bags in Rwanda was extended to all packaging plastics and single-use plastic items in August 2019,

Investing in reusable alternative, like water dispensers, jugs and glasses is not only good for the environment, but also cost effective.

Madam Chair and distinguish delegates,

In view of all the above mentioned points, Rwanda is committed to support any initiative at global level in order to fight against marine litter and microplastic pollution.

Thank you.