

UGANDA

STATEMENT OF THE MANAGEMENT OF PLASTIC POLLUTION

Uganda recognises the threat and dangers posed by plastic litter and associated pollution. Plastic has become the most dominant waste in the country both on land and in the water bodies. Whereas Uganda is a land locked country, it has a large number of inland fresh water bodies which are being suffocated by plastic litter. This is in addition to the pollution caused on land, in the drainage systems, in towns, dump sites and parks.

In 2009 and 2010, the government enacted the Finance Act, 2009 and The Finance (Permitted Plastic Bags and Other Plastics for Exceptional Use) Regulations of 2010.

The Act 2009 prohibited the importation, local manufacture, sale or use of polyethylene bags and materials. The Ban specifically affected plastic carrier bags used for conveyance of goods.

The law did not provide for specific microns because the other permitted plastics for exceptional use may vary in micron.

Government embarked on the enforcement of the ban in 2015 under the Finance Act 2009. The campaign included the following:

- A massive public education and awareness on dangers and impacts associated with plastics and plastic carrier bags across the country through community meetings, print and electronic media;
- Consensus meetings with key stakeholders including: manufacturers, traders, line ministries, Agencies and civil society organizations
- Mobilization and sensitization of Local Governments to implement the ban;
- Sensitization meetings with supermarkets and departmental stores within Kampala to stop distributing and selling the plastic carrier bags;
- carried out enforcement targeting distributors and retail outlets in Central, Eastern and Western regions (180,000kg of Plastic Carrier bags was seized and destroyed);

The efforts drew both support and opposition from the public. While the broader public supported the ban, a strong business lobby comprising of manufacturers and traders continued to oppose the ban, engaging both legal and political methods. The opposition resulted into a temporary court injunction which prevented government from further enforcement and as such reducing the momentum of anti-plastic pollution drive.

New efforts and current actions

Uganda has reviewed the environment law (the National Environment Act No. 5 2019) and banned all plastic carrier bags under 30 microns.

It has in addition imposed producer extended responsibility as part of polluter pays principle. This will ensure that producers of all materials with potential to pollute will have the duty to follow the management of their product through its life cycle.

The law has brought on board a cross section of other actors including, the office of the prime Minister, the National Bureau of Standards, and the Uganda Revenue Authority in addition to the National Environment Authority to implement the provisions of the law on plastic pollution.

Government has also imposed a mandatory condition to all plastic manufacturers to establish recycling plants and ensure that they follow their plastic material and bring it back for recycling. This is a precondition for licencing any new plastic manufacturing enterprise.

Specific emphasis has been put on nationwide multi sectoral multimedia critical environmental literacy campaigns to empower citizens to follow the right waste management hierarchy.

The Education sector has taken lead by slapping a total ban plastic carrier bags in all Education institutions.

Uganda has continued to create awareness in schools through the different environment education initiatives including: Eco-schools, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), School Environment Education programmes (SEEP), UNESCO Associated Schools Network Project (ASPnet), Lake Victoria Environment Education Programme (LVCEEP) and the Sustainable Lifestyles Education initiative.

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