



2023 WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL DAY CELEBRATIONS

THEME: BEAT PLASTIC POLLUTION

ZAMBIA YOUTH STATEMENT

**SUPPORTED
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We, the youth of Zambia, extend our warmest gratitude to all of you gathered here today to celebrate World Environmental Day 2023 under the theme: Beat plastic pollution. We are reminded of the urgent need to address the growing environmental crisis caused by excessive plastic waste. Today, we stand united in our commitment to find sustainable solutions and create a cleaner and healthier future for generations to come.

Waste management is a critical issue that affects the well-being of our environment, communities, and prospects. In Zambia, like many other countries, we face significant challenges in waste management. Improper disposal and inadequate recycling facilities have led to the accumulation of plastic waste in our landfills, rivers, and forests, cities and residential areas polluting our ecosystems and endangering wildlife, dirtying our green environments and broking drainages.

Plastic production and consumption in Africa have increased significantly, leading to a high level of plastic waste contamination. As of 2022, Africa produces 125 million tons of solid waste, 16 million tones is plastic waste 70 to 80% of the total solid waste is recyclable, however, the continent only recycles a total of 4% of the total waste. Most African countries such as Nigeria, South Africa and Egypt have inadequate recycling capacities, which hinders proper waste management. The limited supply of quality plastic waste input, high cost in the recycling sector and lack of secondary markets for recycled plastics limit effective plastic waste treatment and management.

In Zambia, organic waste accounts for most household waste, accounting for 51% on average. Plastic is the second largest waste stream, accounting for approximately 14% of total waste. Paper 6%, metal 9%, and glass 4% respectively. In Zambia Plastic products are manufactured by 95.5% of the companies and only 45.5% recycle PSWs. More than 42000 tons of Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET),

Polyethylene (PE, LLDPE, HDPE) and Polypropylene (PP) is recycled annually meaning, 55% of plastic is left in the streets uncollected.

Zambia has recognized the importance of waste management and has implemented policies and laws to address this issue. The Solid Waste Regulation and Management Act of 2018 provides for the sustainable regulation and management of solid waste as well as general and self-service solid waste services. It does not apply to hazardous waste, e-waste and healthcare waste or waste regulated under the Environmental Management Act of 2011 which provides a legal framework for waste management and emphasizes the principle of "polluter pays." Additionally, the government has established the Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA) to enforce environmental regulations and promote sustainable waste management practices. Furthermore, statutory instrument 12 of 2018, through the local government act gives a clear directive of the fines to lawbreakers, for example, and I quote

- “throwing litter on or along, a street or prescribed road”
- “Discharging rubbish or waste from one moving vehicle or conveyance”
- “Failing to discharge litter or rubbish in a bin in a public place”

End of quote

These are just a few of the 35 guidelines of Zambian laws to manage waste, and if anyone breaks any, that person is liable to a K2500 fine.

However, despite these policies and efforts, there are still significant gaps in waste management in Zambia especially plastic pollution . Some of the key challenges include:

- Inadequate infrastructure: The lack of proper waste collection systems and recycling facilities limits our ability to manage plastic waste effectively.

- Limited awareness and education: There has been limited public awareness campaigns and educational programs to promote responsible waste management practices among citizens, especially the youth.
- Insufficient enforcement: Stricter enforcement of existing waste management regulations necessary to beat plastic pollution and ensure compliance and deter improper disposal of plastic waste.

To address these gaps and combat plastic pollution effectively, we propose the following recommendations:

- Infrastructure development: Invest in youth innovation especially the development of waste collection systems, recycling facilities, and composting Centres across the country to ensure proper waste management and reduce reliance on landfills.
- Education and awareness: Launch comprehensive public awareness campaigns targeting schools, communities, and the media to educate citizens about the impact of plastic pollution and the importance of responsible waste management.
- Waste Management Courses: We encourage the integration of waste management education into the national education curriculum from an early stage such as primary schools to PHD levels.
- Strengthen law enforcement: law enforcement agencies and environmental authorities to enhance monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to deter improper disposal and promote adherence to waste management regulations.
- Set up garbage collection points: we urge all environmental agencies to set up litter collection points across cities to ease the burden of assorted trash, to enhance proper waste management.

- Support innovation and research: Encourage research and innovation in sustainable waste management technologies, such as the development of alternative materials to plastics and the promotion of circular economy principles.
- Plastic treaty 2022: we urge our government to support plastic treaty as it will enhance collaboration in the region and the entire continent through concerted efforts to beat plastic pollution. The treaty marks an important and unprecedented landmark in the global fight to address global pollution and environmental degradation.

In conclusion, World Environmental Day 2023 presents an opportunity for us to reflect on the state of waste management in Zambia and take decisive action to beat plastic pollution. As the youth, we pledge our commitment to be agents of change and work hand in hand with the government, civil society organizations, and international partners to implement sustainable solutions and create a cleaner, greener future for Zambia.

Let us stand united today and every day to beat plastic pollution and safeguard our environment for generations to come. Thank you.