



Turning the Tide on Plastic Pollution by Harmonising Regional Regulations

ALN Kenya together with The Flipflop Project and Sustainable Inclusive Business have launched, on 10 February 2022, a report uncovering the need to adopt streamlined legislation to manage plastic pollution throughout the East African Community (EAC).

The report, titled 'East Africans: Let's Unite for Change', aims to promote a better understanding of existing Single-Use Plastics (SUPs) regulations and lay the groundwork for the adoption of streamlined legislation and collaborative action within the EAC to regulate plastics production, support waste management, and eliminate unnecessary SUPs at a regional level. The report outlines the current state of affairs of the policies, regulations, and laws that address the harmful effects of SUPs in East Africa.

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The report highlights the existing efforts the EAC has taken to combat plastic pollution and is timely in its release as it comes before the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA 5.2). The assembly held in Nairobi from February 28th to March 3rd, 2022 provides a unique opportunity for governments to commit to the establishment of a UN global treaty on plastic pollution that the world has been calling for.

"The report explores the policies and regulations focused on protecting the environment or managing SUPs across Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda, and aims to support increased understanding of the existing regulations, which would provide a foundation for aligned legislation at a regional level." Noted Davina Ngei, from the Flipflop Project, adding that "the issues examined include the adopted legislative and regulatory frameworks within the EAC, the progression of laws across each country, the successes, challenges, the lessons learned, and an overview of other regional and global regulations and treaties."

Plastic pollution is a major growing problem for the global environment. According to IUCN, 300 million tonnes of plastic waste is produced annually, with half of the plastic products

designed for single use. Across East Africa, there are notable efforts to tackle the single-use plastic scourge with strong legislation in place, like in Rwanda and Kenya. Despite this, single-use plastic production and disposal continue to grow rapidly fueled by the covid-19 pandemic. In Kenya for instance, only 27% of the plastic waste generated is collected: 8% collected for recycling and the remaining 19% disposed of in unsanitary landfills or dumpsites.

While data on the extent of plastic pollution on the African continent is still limited, a large number of African countries (34 out of 54) have passed legislation prohibiting the use of certain SUPs, with varying degrees of implementation. However, while legislation and implementation are spotty, the report highlights the need for binding legislation and cooperation to tackle the global plastic pollution crisis.

To combat this, ALN Kenya has partnered with Flipflopi to champion the legislative agenda at an EAC level through the drafting and introduction of a legislative framework to ban the use and manufacture of specific single-use plastics in the EAC to be presented before the EAC Legislative Assembly for consideration.

“The indiscriminate pollution of our oceans which threaten food chains and ocean and lake-based communities should be of grave concern to legislators. There is a need to take immediate action towards harmonising policies to ensure we successfully tackle plastic pollution in the region,” said Karim Anjarwalla, Managing Partner ALN Kenya | Anjarwalla & Khanna.

As the EAC economies grow, we are offered a range of opportunities to rethink single-use plastics and recycling. We’re in a position to develop new production, consumption, and disposal models that are focused around a closed-loop model. This model takes us away from the current consumption and destruction model and can promote community-led closed-loop waste management initiatives to tackle this global issue at a local level while creating new industries and employment opportunities.

“To address plastic waste pollution at source, we need to fundamentally rethink the way we design, use and reuse plastics. The Kenya Plastics Pact, for instance, brings together stakeholders from across the whole plastics value chain to transform the current linear plastics system into a circular economy for plastics which keeps them in use and out of the environment. It is now more relevant than ever to build collective solutions adapted to our region’s reality,” said Karin Boomsma, Sustainable Inclusive Business Project Director.

“Increasing policy frameworks that support more conscious economies while promoting a just transition – in which policies stimulate economic opportunities relating to single-use plastics alternatives; protect livelihoods; and ensure inclusive representation in the policy-making process – is critical. Now is the time for East Africa to build on the momentum of member states, and the UN treaty, raise the bar in the EAC, draw lessons and best practices from around the world, and come

together to outline bold and inspired measures that benefit the health, wellness, and livelihoods of all East Africans,” the report concludes.

“Tanzania and other EAC member states have individually made strides towards addressing the negative effects of single-use plastic. There is an opportunity to change the tide on plastic pollution from a regional level by taking a stand as environmental leaders tackling single-use plastic and with that spur global action and consensus,” said ALN Tanzania Partner, Shemane Amin.

Read the full report [here](#) to see what other recommendations have been suggested to allow us to unite and battle plastic pollution together.