MEMBERS TOOLKIT

Africa Day | 25 May 2022
#StopWasteColonialism
Public Statement

69 Individuals and 136 Organisations Call on Leaders to Stop Waste Colonialism in Africa!

Africa is not yet free from colonialism; it continues to manifest itself in the form of waste trade that allows for the importation of toxic and non-recyclable waste into the African continent, eroding away at the foundations of liberty and environmental justice.

The practice of exporting waste, from the higher-income countries to lower-income countries who are ill-equipped to handle this waste is an unjust form of environmental racism. It places the burden of plastic and toxic waste on the environment, communities, and these countries' informal waste sector, especially in the Global South.
Plastic waste is exported under the banner of plastic recycling, yet in reality, only nine percent of all plastic that has ever been produced since the 1950s has been recycled. Italy, Germany, the USA and Greece export waste to many African countries, leaving Africa and its future generations to shoulder the economic, social and environmental costs of this unjust action. This is a lack of respect for the sovereignty of Africa and the laws of the land that serve to protect its people. All countries need to take responsibility for how they produce, manage and dispose of their waste, which should be as close to the source of generation as possible, and find better solutions for their waste, instead of externalising the problem.

Africa has been leading the way in the fight against single-use plastic, with 34 African states passing laws banning plastic items. The dumping of waste in Africa undermines its milestones and achievements. It also encourages the introduction of end-of-pipe technological ‘fixes’, to deal with the exponential rise of waste. These are false solutions that create severe health implications for workers, communities and the environment by generating significant amounts of greenhouse gases, toxic air pollutants, highly toxic ash, and other potentially hazardous residues. This includes waste incineration, chemical recycling, plastics to fuel or plastic-to-chemical processes, pyrolysis and gasification. Moreover, waste colonialism impacts the informal economy in Africa. In Southern Africa alone, there are more than 120 000 waste pickers, who are the foundation of recycling systems in the region.
This unjust practice deprives waste pickers of their right to earn a safe and fair livelihood. They are forced to deal with environmental pollution, dirty and low-grade plastic waste, and heaps of residual waste from products produced by multinational corporations of the Global North.

Africa is under further threat from the textile industry that is infiltrating the streets of Ghana, among other African countries. Fifteen million used garments pour into Accra every week from the UK, Europe, North America and Australia, flooding the city’s clothing market. Much of the textiles produced today, imported under the guise of economic opportunity for local traders, have a high percentage of polyester, a form of plastic present in many clothing items, releasing microplastic when washed, polluting the water streams of local communities, further burdening them with this problem. During the face-to-face segment of the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention (06 - 17 June 2022) in Geneva, Switzerland, we as civil society are calling for the reduction of plastic production, especially the harmful toxic additives in plastic, to support the realisation of an effective legally binding plastics treaty. It is imperative that the plastic pollution issue is tackled at the source, by reducing fossil fuel extraction and rethinking our plastic production and consumption patterns. Plastic waste trade is exacerbated by global plastic production, rendering all downstream efforts to stop plastic pollution ineffective and enabling the vicious life cycle of plastics.
We, as civil society, urgently demand that our African governments:

- Prevent plastic waste from being dumped into the region;
- Protect existing and new legislation that upholds our right to a safe, clean and healthy environment that is toxic-free;
- Exercise their right to refuse shipments through Prior Informed Consent (PIC), especially for hazardous and environmentally unsound plastic waste;
- Stringently enforce existing legislations like the Basel and Bamako conventions, which restrict and at times prohibit waste imports, and undertake swift return-to-sender actions on illegal shipments;
- Adopt national systems that allow waste pickers to be part of all decision making processes in waste management;
- Invest in the ongoing discussions around a global plastic treaty, to ensure that it reflects the local plastic pollution realities within the region and that attempts are made to address the problems of plastic across its entire value chain, especially through a strict cap on the production of new plastic.

The signatory organisations take a stand against waste colonialism in Africa and demand that Global North exporting countries cease this unjust practice!

Swahili, Portuguese, French.
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 13 June 2022

[Organisation Name] Joins 69 Individuals and 136 Organisations to Call on Leaders to Stop Waste Colonialism in Africa!

[City, Country] – Africa is not yet free from colonialism; it continues to manifest itself in the form of waste trade that allows for the importation of toxic and non-recyclable waste into the African continent, eroding away the foundations of liberty and environmental justice.

Today, civil society organisations presented a letter, signed by 69 individuals and 136 organisations, at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention in Geneva, Switzerland, during the ‘Basel Plastics Amendments First Year Report Card’, a side event organised by the Basel Action Network.

The letter calls on African leaders to respond to this threat by enforcing new and existing legislation that protects the rights of all Africans to a safe, clean and healthy environment. It further calls upon all world leaders to take a stand against waste colonialism in Africa and demand that Global North exporting countries cease this unjust practice!
Recent research from the Basel Action Network (Source: Materials Research L3C) shows evidence of 136,000 kilograms of PVC waste exported from the United States to Nigeria.

“Nigeria is already overwhelmed with plastic waste, we barely have enough facilities to recycle internally generated plastics in Nigeria (less than 12%); More so, PVCs are toxic, which compounds the problem. I’m urging the Federal Government of Nigeria to sign the Bamako convention on toxic waste, as it will be an effective legal tool in stemming the importation of toxic wastes into Africa,” Weyinmi Okotie, of Green Knowledge Foundation (GKF) Nigeria.

For Africa to be protected from waste trade, all parties need to ratify and implement the Basel Ban Amendment of the Basel Convention. This prohibits the exports of all hazardous waste covered by the Convention intended for final disposal of, reuse, recycling and recovery from OECD to non-OECD countries. Furthermore, African countries need to foster greater ownership of the Bamako Convention, which is the regional transboundary waste instrument. This prohibits the import of hazardous waste into Africa. To date, the Bamako Convention has 29 Parties of 54 African Union countries, which is a missed opportunity for the region to take positive strides toward stopping and fighting waste colonialism on the continent.
“Every day illegal exports of wastes flow into Africa, violating the Basel and Bamako Conventions, and yet Exporting countries and African countries are not diligently enforcing these treaty obligations. Only when the exporters and importers are prosecuted and their shipments returned at their cost, will we see an end to this ugly form of trade,” Jim Puckett, director of the Basel Action Network (BAN).

Waste colonialism encourages the introduction of end-of-pipe technological ‘fixes’, to deal with the exponential rise of waste. These are false solutions that create severe health implications for workers, communities and the environment by generating significant amounts of greenhouse gases, toxic air pollutants, highly toxic ash, and other potentially hazardous residues. This includes waste incineration, chemical recycling, plastics to fuel or plastic-to-chemical processes, pyrolysis and gasification.

“Ensuring that countries manage their own waste is the best way to prevent global environmental injustice. It is also essential for countries to truly come to terms with their waste footprint rather than shipping it off in containers. Once countries fully realise the absurdity of wasting precious materials and resources, harming the planet, our climate, and human health in the process, they become ready to shift to local zero waste economies centred around reuse, repair and composting of bio-waste. Safe, toxic-free recycling also has an important role in zero waste economies, though it is more challenging for plastics than for metals, glass and paper,” Sirine Rached, Global Plastics Policy Coordinator for the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA).
[Quote from the organisation of how waste colonialism impacts your part of the world].

Media Contacts:

[Name of Organisation’s Point of Contact
Email | Cell Phone ].

For more information, see no-burn.org/stopwastecolonialism.

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**BFFP** is a global movement envisioning a future free from plastic pollution. Since its launch in 2016, more than 11,000 organisations and individual supporters from across the world have joined the movement to demand massive reductions in single-use plastics and to push for lasting solutions to the plastic pollution crisis.

**GAIA** is a worldwide alliance of more than 800 grassroots groups, non-governmental organisations, and individuals in over 90 countries. With our work we aim to catalyse a global shift towards environmental justice by strengthening grassroots social movements that advance solutions to waste and pollution. We envision a just, zero waste world built on respect for ecological limits and community rights, where people are free from the burden of toxic pollution, and resources are sustainably conserved, not burned or dumped.

[About your organisation].
Dear Friends,

Today [Name of organisation] joins unified calls, for leaders, to Stop Waste Colonialism in Africa!

In a letter, signed by 69 individuals and 136 organisations, we urged African leaders to respond to the threat of waste colonialism by enforcing new and existing legislation that protects the rights of all Africans to a safe, clean and healthy environment. It further calls upon all world leaders to take a stand against waste colonialism in Africa and demand that Global North exporting countries cease this unjust practice!

All countries need to take responsibility for how they produce, manage and dispose of their waste, which should be as close to the source of generation as possible, and find better solutions for their waste, instead of externalising the problem.

Help spread the message!

- Share this letter with your government;
- See the attached media release [Attach adaptable media release]
- Visit the webpage for more information on waste colonialism in Africa: For more information, see no-burn.org/stopwastecolonialism

Best,

[Your Name]