

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](#).

Signatory Organisations

- *350 Ghana Reducing Our Carbon.*
- *Action for Nature.*
- *AEEFG.*
- *Africa Coal Network.*
- *AGENDA.*
- *ALEDD.*
- *Alianza Basura Cero Chile.*
- *Amigos da Terra Brasil.*
- *Aotearoa Plastic Pollution Alliance.*
- *Aoycs Tanzania.*
- *Asociacion Retorna.*
- *Associação de Combate aos Poluentes.*
- *Association of Saamaka Authorities.*
- *Association Zero Dechet Senegal*
- *Ban SUP (Single Use Plastic).*
- *Bangalore.*
- *Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association.*
- *Bargny Coast Waterkeeper.*
- *Bengaluru*
- *Better Than Yesterday.*
- *BINNADANG Amianan.*
- *Bio Vision Africa.*
- *Biodiversity Conservation Center.*

Signatory Organisations

- *Biowatch SA.*
- *Cafeteria Culture.*
- *California Communities Against Toxics.*
- *Centre for Citizens Conserving Environment & Management.*
- *Centre for Earth Works.*
- *Centre for Environment Justice and Development.*
- *Centre for Environmental Rights.*
- *Centre for Human Rights & Governance.*
- *Centre for Zero Waste & Development in Africa.*
- *Centre for Alternative Development.*
- *Chilambo General Trade Company Limited.*
- *Citizens Environmental and Social Concern.*
- *Clean Air Action Network of Glens Falls.*
- *Climate Justice Alliance.*
- *Community Transformation Foundation Network.*
- *Consumers' Association of Penang.*
- *Diamon Foundation.*
- *DION.*
- *Douala, Littoral / Association Emergence Sans Frontieres.*
- *Earthlife Africa.*
- *Ecological Alert and Recovery.*
- *End Plastic Pollution.*
- *Environmental Rights Action, Friends of the Earth Nigeria.*
- *European Environmental Bureau.*
- *Farmworker Association of Florida.*
- *Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland.*
- *Friends of the Earth, Slovakia.*
- *Friends of the Farewell.*
- *Front Commun pour la Protection de l'Environnement et des Espaces Protégés.*
- *Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives.*
- *Green Delaware.*
- *Green Knowledge Foundation.*
- *Green Vientiane.*
- *Greenleaf Advocacy and Empowerment Center.*

Signatory Organisations

- *groundWork, Friends of the Earth, South Africa.*
- *Health and Environment Justice Support.*
- *Heinrich Boll Tunisia.*
- *Heirs To Our Oceans.*
- *Humusz Szövetség.*
- *Irrigation Training and Economic Empowerment Organization.*
- *Jordens Vänner, Friends of the Earth Sweden*
- *Kishoka Youth Organization.*
- *La Paz.*
- *Les Amis de la Terre - Belgique*
- *Let's Do It Tchad.*
- *Let's Do it Tunisia.*
- *Liberatory Learners.*
- *Mazingira Plus.*
- *Microplastic Research Group.*
- *Mother Earth Foundation Philippines.*
- *Movement Training Network.*
- *NaCEM Sierra Leone.*
- *National Association of Professional Environmentalists.*
- *Networking for Society Development Organization.*
- *NGO Environment-People-Law.*
- *Nipe Fagio.*
- *No Plastic In My Sea.*
- *No Waste Louisiana.*
- *Occidental Arts and Ecology Center.*
- *Offkey Art.*
- *Pan African Vision for the Environment.*
- *PASUP.*
- *PCC Environmental Club.*
- *PELUM.*
- *Plastic Change.*
- *Plastic Free Emory.*
- *Plastic Free Future.*

Signatory Organisations

- *Plastic Soup Foundation.*
- *Plastics Rebellion.*
- *Play and Clean Initiative.*
- *Polish Zero Waste Association.*
- *Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada.*
- *Reachout Salone.*
- *Red de Acción por los Derechos Ambientales.*
- *Rio Grande International Study Center.*
- *Riverview.*
- *Russian Social Ecological Union, Friends of the Earth Russia.*
- *Sahabat Alam Malaysia, Friends of the Earth.*
- *Sakhalin Environment Watch.*
- *Sea Hugger.*
- *She4Earth.*
- *Social-ecology Union of Tatarstan.*
- *Society for Earth (TNZ).*
- *Socio-ecological Union International.*
- *Sol Center.*
- *South Durban Community Environmental Alliance.*
- *Story of Stuff Project.*
- *Sustainable Environment Development Initiative.*
- *Sustainable Research and Action for Environmental Development.*
- *Tagum SDG Youth Action Force.*
- *Taiwan Watch Institute.*
- *The greens movement of Georgia.*
- *The Last Beach Cleanup.*
- *The Post Landfill Action Network.*
- *The Scarab Trust.*
- *Thred.*
- *Tierra Nativa, Amigos de la Tierra Argentina.*
- *United Kingdom Without Incineration Network.*
- *Upstream.*
- *War on Waste Negros Oriental.*
- *We Clean We Green.*

Signatory Organisations

- *Western media for environment and conservation.*
- *Women's Leadership and Training Programme.*
- *Work on Waste USA (AEHSP) -see AmericanHealthStudies.org.*
- *Young Volunteers for the Environment.*
- *Zelena akcija, Friends of the Earth Croatia.*
- *ZERO - Associação sistema Terrestre Sustentável.*
- *Zero Waste Association of South Africa.*
- *Zero Waste Europe.*
- *Zero Waste Ithaca.*
- *Zero Waste Skhirat.*
- *Zéro Zbel.*
- *Ubuntu Sports Academy.*