



Rwanda Environment Management Authority

Talking Points for Director General Juliet Kabera High-Level Session of the Geneva Beat Plastic Pollution Dialogues 11 March 2020 | Webinar

- Distinguished guests
- Friends of the environment

Good afternoon from Kigali, Rwanda! Mwiriwe neza!

It's great to be with you this afternoon for this session on the Geneva Beat Plastic Pollution Dialogues and to share some of Rwanda's experience and perspectives on the road to addressing plastic waste in our communities and ecosystems.

For more than two decades, Rwanda has prioritised environmental protection and conservation. This focus on sustainable development and ensuring a healthy environment for all people living in, and visiting, Rwanda has had a significant return on investment.

One of the major green initiatives was the banning of plastic bags and specific types of packaging almost 15 years ago. This was done because we understood the threat that they posed to our health and environment.

While the ban was considered revolutionary at the time, we knew that more needed to be done to limit the damage plastic waste is doing to our environment. That's why we took national efforts to the next level and turned our attention to single use plastics.

In September 2019, a law that prohibits the manufacture, import, use and sale of plastic bags and single-use plastic items came into effect in Rwanda. The measure addresses the growing problem of single-use plastic pollution, which are the leading cause of plastic pollution in Rwanda's lakes, rivers, drains and agricultural land.

Retailers were given three months to clear their stocks and factories in Rwanda making single-use plastic items have been given a grace period of two years. Today, we are working with the Private Sector Federation and the Cleaner Production and Climate Innovation Centre to support business in the transition to alternatives.

This experience has guided our contribution to the global discussion on addressing plastic pollution. We have learned that it's possible if the community, private sector and policy makers work together. That's why the Ad Hoc Open-Ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics towards UNEA5.2 in 2022 is so important.

Following our many and robust conversations over recent months, we are pleased with the process that has been made to produce an international, legally binding instrument on plastic pollution.

The instrument recognises the inherent transboundary nature of the issue of plastic pollution and the need to tackle it at its sources. It also makes the strong point that a more circular economy is needed if we are to have any chance of building a sustainable and regenerative global economy in the coming decades.

I wish to thank all nations for their interest and support of the resolution proposed by Rwanda and Peru. We also thank the UN Environment Programme, scientific and legal advisory bodies, the Environment Management Group and the Ad Hoc Open-Ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics. Your work has enabled us to progress to this important point.

As a final point, I would like to encourage all nations to take immediate steps to limit the manufacture and use of single-use plastics and address plastic pollution. As we prepare a strong international agreement through an intergovernmental negotiating committee, there is much we can each do in our own countries right now.

We look forward to your continued support in building the political will and moment for an international, legally binding instrument on plastic pollution by the sixth session of the UN Environment Assembly.

Thank you for your kind attention.