



Plastic bags ban is a blessing for Kenya

The Cabinet secretary for Environment and Natural Resources gazette the ban on plastics on February 28th 2017. The ban took effect on 28th August 2017 upon which my board of management and the NEMA staff embarked on enforcement of the said ban.

Indeed, the ban on plastic bags is a noble idea whose time has come. For the lovers of the environment, the ban is long overdue. For fifteen years, the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) has been working with stakeholders to crack the riddle on how to get rid of plastic bags. However, there has been limited goodwill from some quarters that were used to the status quo.

As the implementation of the Gazette Notice No. 2356 takes shape, many Kenyans have applauded the environmental watch dog (NEMA) for taking the bold step to save the country from the plastic bags menace which has resulted in major consequences to our environment and other sectors of our economy including livestock, fisheries, tourism and the built environment. This is compounded by the fact that plastic bags take over 100 years to degrade. It is known that 100 million plastic bags are handed out in Kenya by supermarkets alone. These bags end up clogging the drainage systems leading to flooding in major cities in Kenya. Recent studies have found that more than 50% of cattle in peri-urban had plastic bags in their rumens.

As you may be aware, the penalties for contravening the ban are commensurate to the crime. Section 144 of EMCA states that, “any person who contravenes the provision of the gazette notice shall be liable to a fine of not less than two million Kenya Shillings, and not more than four million Kenya shillings, or imprisonment of a term of not less than one year but not more than four years or to both such fine and imprisonment”

The Authority is calling on County governments and other institutions to join in this noble task of getting the country rid of plastic bags; moreover, the public are urged to make use of the drop-off points, as this comprises one of the major takeback schemes that reduces the number of plastic bags in our environment. Notably, the ban has opened new horizons for creativity and alternative livelihoods for the youths, women and People Living with Disabilities.

The public is additionally urged to embrace a mindset of ownership and positive mindset to minimize waste by embracing principles such as recycling, and re-using

of products. The NEMA board of management will continue to provide unwavering support to the Authority in terms of policy direction in order to achieve her mandate. We are thankful to the support received from the public, private sector, the international community and other government agencies thus far.

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CHAIRMAN, NEMA BOARD OF MANAGEMENT