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World Environment Day : CSO Coalition Urges Kenyan Government and Private Sector to Take Urgent Action on Ending Plastic Pollution Across Its Entire Lifecycle

Nairobi, June 5, 2025- In commemoration of this year's World Environment Day, a group of Civil Society actors working to end plastic pollution in Kenya are sounding the alarm on the urgent need for concrete action from Kenya's government to end plastic pollution across its lifecycle. The escalating plastic pollution crisis is threatening our environment, health and marine ecosystems. With this year's World Environment Day theme focused on **#EndingPlasticPollution**, the coalition highlights the escalating plastic pollution crisis threatening our environment, health and marine ecosystems.

Plastic production and consumption has tremendously increased globally over the past decade reaching unsustainable levels necessitating significant and collective efforts to address the key drivers of plastic pollution. In Kenya, plastics continue to be a burden on our environment despite the ban on plastic bags.

Research further highlights the effects of plastic on human health. A study undertaken by the Centre for Environment Justice and Development unveiled the presence of toxic chemicals in plastic consumer products such as toys **resulting in exposure to ecosystems, humans and particularly vulnerable groups including women, children and marginalized communities** who face disproportionate exposure to toxic chemicals in plastics deepening health inequalities. ([LINK DANGEROUS FUN REPORT](#)). These **chemicals are linked to multiple diseases such as cancer, respiratory illnesses, diabetes, obesity and reproductive disorders.**

Authorities must take into account the chemical impacts of plastic pollution and ensure current and future regulation on plastics consider chemical additives to these plastics. **Kenya as a net importer of plastics must ensure that regulations control the import of products containing these harmful substances and prohibit the recycling of plastics containing hazardous material.**

While regulatory frameworks exist, the **implementation and enforcement of these policies has been inconsistent and underfunded**. Industry lobbying and political interests continue to delay and frustrate implementation efforts and perpetuate environments for more plastic production and imports while promoting false solutions focusing on end of pipe solutions instead of addressing the root cause. **We remain deeply concerned by the continued perpetuation of false solutions like recycling and waste to energy** and the undermining of progress by corporations through tactics such as aggressive lobbying, litigation, greenwashing, and political influence. These actions delay meaningful change, protect profit over people, and keep plastic production unchecked.

Recycling alone will not solve this crisis; it's time for real accountability, reduced plastic production, and justice for the workers who've carried the burden of corporate pollution for far too long. Kenya's government must resist the corporate capture by corporations and manufacturers that make massive profits out of plastics at the expense of the wellbeing of people and the planet.

Producers must be held accountable for pollution by plastic products introduced into the market through Extended Producer Responsibility Systems. These systems **must be inclusive and waste pickers must be at the center of these systems recognizing and compensating their efforts and contribution to the recycling sector in Kenya**. Waste pickers remain underpaid, unsafe, excluded and underappreciated despite their critical role in the plastic life cycle. Women waste pickers in particular are especially vulnerable. In Kenya alone, women represent a substantial number of between 40% - 50% of waste pickers in urban areas.

Beyond waste management, **plastics are a climate justice issue**. Plastic production continues to wreak havoc as **99% of plastics begin as fossil fuel**. Greenhouse gases are emitted at each stage of the plastic life cycle further driving the climate crisis.

As Kenya positions itself as a leader in the global fight against plastic pollution and advocates for a reduction in plastic production, **it is critical that its actions align with its commitments**. **Plastic pollution must be understood in the context of the entire plastics lifecycle**, from production to disposal. The Kenyan Government must carefully consider the broader environmental and social implications of projects ensuring they **do not contribute and feed plastic and petrochemical industries undermining global efforts to cap plastic production**.

The planned licensing of offshore oil and gas blocks, especially in ecologically sensitive areas like Lamu, **risks not only habitat destruction and oil spills but also increased marine plastic pollution**. By potentially providing feedstock for petrochemical industries, these

projects impede global action to address plastic pollution from the source, plastic production. Additionally offshore activities generate plastic waste from packaging materials to discarded equipment that can choke coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass beds. These ecosystems are critical for climate resilience and local livelihoods. **Moving forward with such extractive projects undermines efforts to restore marine health and end plastic pollution, and Kenya must prioritize environmental integrity over short-term gains.**

Plastic pollution is a global crisis and **global action is needed to end this crisis through a legally binding agreement that will deal with the plastic pollution from production to disposal.** After 5 rounds of the treaty negotiations, little progress has been made towards tackling this global crisis. **We urge Kenya's government to take lead, show more ambition and urge other member states to make real progress** on ending plastic pollution by delivering a treaty that will **prioritise cuts in plastic production to protect human health, human rights and the environment** and safeguard communities from the devastating impacts of the plastics.

We urge the National Government to:

- Fully enforce the ban on single-use plastic bags and expand it to include other problematic and unnecessary plastic items and products that cannot be reused or recycled effectively and close loopholes that allow illegal imports through porous borders.
- Ensure consistent funding, capacity and political will for implementation of existing plastic waste regulations.
- Introduce mandatory restrictions in standards or regulations on the use of toxic chemicals in consumer products and implement border controls such as testing, monitoring to prevent these harmful chemicals from entering Kenya market in form of products such as toys, textiles, near end-of-life products among others and prohibit the recycling of plastics containing harmful substances.
- Support local innovators and small businesses working on safe, affordable plastic alternatives to empower consumers with real, affordable choices essential in reducing plastic dependency.
- Champion a legally binding Global Plastic Treaty embedding human rights and environmental justice that includes caps on plastic production, not just end-of-pipe solutions, and pushes for ambitious measures and time-bound targets to end plastic pollution across the plastic life cycle.
- Reconsider and reject investments or policies that promote plastic and petrochemical industry growth, including offshore oil and gas exploration that feeds plastic production.

We further urge the private sector actors to:

- Stop the manufacture and marketing of plastics that contain toxic additives or cannot be safely reused or recycled and prioritize design and innovation of safe and environmentally sound alternatives.
- Finance the collection, transportation, and safe disposal of plastic waste from their products and ensure Extended Producer Responsibility systems integrate waste pickers, compensate them fairly and ensure they work under safe and dignified conditions.
- Address plastic manufacture volumes and align corporate sustainability strategies with science-based targets to reduce plastic production and environmental harm instead of overemphasizing recycling. The private sector should adopt innovative strategies such as deposit refund schemes incentivizing return, collection and recovery of plastic products.
- Collaborate transparently with civil society organizations and frontline communities to co-develop solutions that are just, equitable, and science-based.

About the CSO Coalition to End Plastic Pollution:

The CSO Coalition to End Plastic Pollution is a diverse alliance of civil society organizations in Kenya working collectively to end plastic pollution. The coalition brings together researchers, environmental advocates, legal experts, grassroots movements, community leaders, and waste picker networks to push for systemic change across the entire plastics lifecycle, from production to disposal with the shared goal of building a future that is plastic-free, people-led, and policy-backed.

The coalition champions policies that protect human health and the environment from the harms of plastic pollution, protects human rights, holds corporations and governments accountable, and amplifies the voices of frontline communities disproportionately affected by plastic pollution. Through coordinated advocacy, public education, and engagement in global negotiations, the coalition envisions a just, inclusive, and plastic-free future for Kenya and beyond.

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