



RWANDA ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

Your Quarterly Newsletter

January - March 2022



THE WORLD TAKES MAJOR STEP TO END PLASTIC POLLUTION

We are pleased to share with you REMA quarterly newsletter which features key stories and photos of our work these past months. We hope you will find it interesting and informative.

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Rwanda Drivers urged to beat vehicles air pollution



GREEN AMAYAGA Project is reducing firewood use in Rwanda's Southern Province



REMA Launches R-COOL GO - An affordable opportunity to own energy-saving cooling appliances

Rwanda champions international legally binding treaty on Plastic pollution



Juliet Kabera, Director General, Rwanda Environment Management Authority at UNEA 5.2

Rwanda has joined with Peru to lead negotiations on a draft resolution that will pave the way for an international legally binding agreement on marine litter and plastic pollution. The resolution was presented at the second segment of the 5th UN Environment Assembly (UNEA 5.2) in late February.

The UN Environment Assembly brought together the world's nations in Nairobi to formally start negotiations on the treaty, which would reduce global plastic wastes by curbing the manufacture and use of single use plastics, and fostering a circular economy for plastics.

The draft resolution to develop an international legally binding agreement was proposed by Rwanda and Peru and presented by both countries in Geneva, Switzerland in September 2021 during a conference organised by the United Nations for Environmental Program. The draft has been shared and extensive consultation is being undertaken to foster support from around the world.

The resolution represents the most ambitious global move against

plastic pollution to date and seeks bold, urgent, and united action to tackle this transboundary issue. If successful, the resolution will convene an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee that will establish an open mandate for negotiations, promote a comprehensive approach to address the lifecycle of plastics, identify key elements of the global response and develop a new legally binding global instrument, such as a treaty.

Under plans drawn up by Rwanda and Peru, and with support from the European Union and other countries, nations would be required to develop national action plans to limit plastic production and use in their economies.

The resolution also encourages the establishment of shared objectives, reporting and monitoring as well as scientific and technical support and financial and technical assistance. Under the resolution, the concept of common but differentiated responsibility will ensure all countries work together to reduce plastic pollution, with major polluters taking the lead.

"The proposals being deliberated by Member States envision

actions, from source to sea, that address all sources of pollution along the whole lifecycle - from production through disposal and reduction of the leakage of existing plastic currently in the global ecosystem. Member States will need to consider in their negotiations the different types of plastics and additives within them, especially to allow plastics to be recycled safely and to foster a circular plastics economy," said Inger Andersen, Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme.

Plastic pollution is a threat to the planet at large, and while marine and coastal areas are suffering, so too are landlocked countries like Rwanda. Plastic pollution is a threat to ecosystems, human health, livelihoods and terrestrial and freshwater environments as well as to our oceans.

"Global collaboration is necessary to tackle this threat. Only united international action will enable and encourage local solutions. We need concrete, mandatory commitments to safeguard the planet's future and put an end to plastic pollution," said Juliet Kabera, Director General, Rwanda Environment Management Authority.

Like much of the world, Rwanda was drowning in plastic before it adopted a law related to the prohibition of manufacturing, importation, use and sale of plastic carry bags in 2008 and later single-use plastic items in 2019.

This decisive action against plastic has not only made Rwanda one of the world's cleanest places, it has also energised economic growth by creating green jobs around the country.

Many companies and cooperatives started manufacturing environmental-friendly bags made from locally available and environmental-friendly materials. This provided employment to many Rwandans, especially young people and women.

In an example of the opportunities this brought, in the first month of Kenya's ban on plastic bags, Rwandan manufacturers exported 78 tonnes of biodegradable bags made from paper, cloth and sisal worth USD 250,000.

This was a strong signal that doing the right thing for the environment also pays off economically,

and reinforced the importance of bringing the business community on board to find sustainable alternatives.

Currently, more than 60 countries have expressed their support for the resolution and the treaty. Alongside Rwanda and Peru, they include the European Union and its 27 Member States, the United States of America, Senegal, Costa Rica, Norway, Switzerland, Guinea, Philippines, Ecuador, Kenya, Chile, Colombia, Uganda, Madagascar, the United Kingdom, Cabo Verde, Azerbaijan, Dominican Republic, Uruguay, Panama, Timor-Leste, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Comoros, Eswatini, Pakistan, Benin, Gabon, Iceland, Georgia, the Republic of Korea, Mauritius, North Macedonia, Djibouti and Iran.

Key Facts About Plastic Pollution

Worldwide:

- Two million plastic bags are used every minute around the world. On average, a plastic bag is used for just 12 minutes – but take up to 1000 years to decompose.

- In 1974, the average person consumed 2kg of plastic a year. Today, the average consumption per capita is 43kg – an increase of over 2000%
- Over the next five years, the world's leading plastic manufacturers are set to increase production by a third.
- Just 9% of plastics worldwide are recycled

Rwanda:

- Rwanda banned single-use polythene plastic bags in September 2008. This law was later upgraded to include other types of single use plastic packaging materials.
- This was followed by a law banning the use and production of single-use plastics in 2019. This was accompanied by a two year grace period, which has recently come to an end.
- Rwanda is a founding member and co-chair of the African Circular Economy Alliance.

REMA Launches R-COOL GO - an affordable opportunity to own energy-saving cooling appliances

The Ministry of Environment through the Rwanda Environment Management Authority (REMA) have on January 31st launches the Rwanda Cooling Initiative's Green On-Wage (R-COOL GO) financing mechanism – through which the environmentally friendly refrigerators and air conditioners will be more widely accessible and affordable in Rwanda.

Eligible salaried employees from the public and private sectors may request loans from participating banks to purchase new cooling appliances that meet strict performance criteria set by the Ministry of Environment through Rwanda Environment Management Authority, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme's United for Efficiency (U4E) team and the Basel Agency for Sustainable Energy.



REMA's Director General Juliet Kabera noted, "Affordable and accessible cooling solutions are critical to the health and well-being of Rwandan consumers. While we encourage nature-based solutions such as natural shading and ventilation wherever possible, me-

chanical cooling systems are still essential in many situations. We are delighted to offer a new path for consumers to meet their needs while reducing burdens on the electricity grid and the planet."

According to U4E's Project Manager, Brian Holuj, "By bringing together

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the expertise of the public sector, financial institutions, local vendors, civil society and international partners, Green On-Wage enables an unprecedented opportunity to scale-up adoption of the latest technologies by making them cost-competitive with typical outdated systems that use far more energy and potent greenhouse gasses”.

“R-COOL GO positions Rwanda as a leading country in the implementation of innovative business models that support households to reduce their energy consumption and improve their household economy through the adoption of high-efficiency refrigeration and air-conditioning systems. Institutions such as REMA, Enviro-Serve, the Bank of Kigali and GT Bank are demonstrating strong leadership and commitment in addressing the country’s climate challenges. The programme also

reflects the capacity of Rwanda’s public and private sectors to work together to address the challenges for the benefit of the national economy. UNEP U4E and BASE are very honoured to be able to collaborate with these entities and be part of this great initiative”, Daniel Magallon, CEO of BASE

R-COOL GO is a consumer finance product in which salaried employees choose their desired refrigerator or air conditioner and request a loan from a participating bank. If the client is deemed eligible following a credit check, the bank pays the vendor who provides the appliance to the client. The employee then repays a loan over a period up to 36 months through monthly deductions of their salary.

Also, as an incentive for consumers to turn-in an old, operable cooling appliance for proper recycling, a rebate

voucher is offered that may be used for a 15% discount on a future purchase from the vendor.

So far, Bank of Kigali (BK) and Guarantee Trust Bank (GT Bank) are the participating banks and vendors include: Hotpoint Rwanda, Akagera Business Group Africa (ABG), Alien Technologies and Denmar Ltd. Others are in negotiations to join the initiative.

The launch of R-COOL GO is a key milestone in implementing Rwanda’s sustainable development objectives. For example, as part of the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol, the Government developed a National Cooling Strategy (NCS) in 2019 which provides context and identifies priority interventions to optimally address Rwanda’s growing cooling needs in keeping with a green growth pathway.

The World takes major step to End Plastic Pollution | UNEA 5.2 adopts historic Rwanda-Peru resolution



The fifth Session of the United Nations Environmental Assembly has today adopted a historic resolution to end plastic pollution.

The resolution, which was co-authored by Rwanda and Peru, sets in motion the development of an international, legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution.

All countries - be they coastal, landlinked, or island states - are affected by the growing dependence on single-use and non-biodegradable plastics.

The resolution adopted today in Nairobi sets out the urgent need for a legally-binding global framework that takes bold action to

transform humanity’s relationship with plastic. The framework will encourage regular ambition-setting and monitoring through national action plans, as well as international cooperation and knowledge-sharing.

It is vital that solutions to plastic waste are sustainable and the

development of a treaty aims to achieve this. Lasting change can only come from interventions that address the full life-cycle of plastics and create a viable circular economy for plastics. This means focusing on product design and distribution, sustainable consumption as well as revolutionising waste management.

In the negotiations, the Rwandan delegation - led by Minister of Environment, Dr. Jeanne d'Arc Mujawamariya and supported by Director General of the Rwanda Environment Management Authority, Juliet Kabera - drew upon the country's experiences of addressing plastic pollution and promoting investment in sustainable alternatives.

"We are delighted that the international community has adopted the Rwanda-Peru resolution to end plastic pollution. This decision is a historic milestone in the global effort to prevent our planet from drowning in plastics. We are proud of the role we have played so far, and we are optimistic about the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity nations now

have to create a legally-binding framework which commits us all to a more sustainable future," Minister Mujawamariya said.

"Rwanda has experienced firsthand the impact of plastic pollution. We have seen the toll it has taken on our natural environment, as well as on our people," the Minister added. "This is why we have taken ambitious action against plastic pollution. In 2008, Rwanda was one of the first countries to ban single-use polythene plastic bags, and in 2019, we passed a transformative law which began phasing out all single-use plastics."

The passing of the resolution, and eventual creation of a global treaty, will facilitate international cooperation through networks of technology and knowledge sharing, as well as on creating appropriate mechanisms for investment. This collaborative spirit will ensure the world can take full advantage of the economic opportunities created by a viable and vibrant circular economy for plastic.

The Government of Rwanda is optimistic, given the strong in-

ternational will for change on this matter, that negotiations can continue to progress over the coming years as the treaty is developed. The planet needs a strong solution to the growing global threat of plastic pollution as soon as possible.

That's why Rwanda is bringing together a like-minded group of nations to create the High Ambition Coalition to End Plastic Pollution. The coalition will work with the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee as it develops the treaty, and advocate for urgent action to protect human health, biodiversity, and our climate. The goal of the coalition is to drive ambitious action during the negotiating process.

The coalition is co-chaired by Rwanda and Norway and counts as members countries from around the world - both coastal and land-linked - a reflection that plastic pollution is a planetary crisis, a threat which affects us all. Rwanda and Norway invite all Member States to join the High Ambition Coalition to End Plastic Pollution.

How the GREEN AMAYAGA Project is reducing firewood use in Rwanda's Southern Province

In October 2020, the Rwanda Environment Management Authority in collaboration with the Rwanda Forestry Authority and the districts of Kamonyi, Nyanza, Ruhango and Gisagara, launched a ground-breaking six-year initiative to promote biodiversity, foster ecosystem services, increase agricultural productivity and reduce the vulnerability of people and ecosystems to the adverse effects of climate change in the Southern Province.

Since then, the Green Amayaga Project has run an awareness campaign on the use of safe, effective and clean cooking technologies. The goal is to promote energy efficiency by reducing the use of biomass for household cooking in the region. For many years, the widespread and intensive use of biomass energy in the Amayaga region

has had a serious environmental impact, including deforestation.

To address the issue, improved cookstoves have been distributed to project beneficiaries in Kamonyi and Ruhango districts to both

improve human health and contribute to mitigating deforestation and climate change. Since February 2021, about 21,000 households have been provided with improved cookstoves in the two districts.



Fortunee Iyakaremye, one of Green Amayaga Project beneficiaries provided with Improved Cookstove in Kamonyi District.

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Beneficiaries say that the cookstoves are not only helping them to use less firewood, but also to save money and time to do other income generating activities.

"The cookstoves from the Green Amayaga Project are more efficient than the traditional 3-stone stoves that we were used to. It was hard for us to get enough firewood to cook with because we don't have many forests in this region. But the new Songa cookstove saves energy. With a single piece of firewood, you can cook your meal because once the cookstove is hot, you don't need to add any more fuel. Your food is ready in just a few minutes," said Fortunee Iyakaremye, a farmer from Kamonyi District.

The Songa cookstoves' thermal efficiency is above 30. They also have fuel saving potential of more than 50% compared to traditional 3-stone stoves, which mitigates deforestation.

Before getting the improved cook-

stove, Fortunee struggled to concentrate on farming as she had to spend a lot of time collecting firewood. Her neighbours' children would also often drop out of school to collect firewood, as their parents could not afford to buy firewood.

"Some children even dropped out of school," she said. "Their parents had little time to earn a living, but now it is possible since we got these cookstoves. We believe that our children will now concentrate on school as they no longer need to spend a lot of time collecting firewood," Iyakaremye added.

The Green Amayaga Project aims to increase forest cover in the region. In total, 1,000 hectares will be covered with productive forests. In addition, 25,000 hectares of agroforestation including fruit trees will be managed by the project.

According to Philbert Nkurunziza, the Green Amayaga Project Coordinator, reducing firewood use will address deforestation in the region.

"In the districts covered by the project, 60,000 improved cookstoves will be distributed over a period of six years. The cookstoves are expected to avoid about five million tons of greenhouse gases emissions over six years. Over the next 20 years, it is expected that the cookstoves will avoid approximately 15 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions," he said.

Improved cookstoves offer considerable advantages for vulnerable households, such as reduced time and labour gathering firewood, as well as improved health outcomes by reducing exposure to household air pollution.

The Green Amayaga Project is being implemented by the Rwanda Environment Management Authority with funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The project intervention areas include Kamonyi, Nyanza, Ruhango and Gisagara districts in Rwanda's Southern Province.

Rwanda joins World to celebrate 50 years of UN Environment Programme



On the sidelines of the United Nations Environment Assembly convened in Kenya's capital Nairobi, Rwanda, joined the rest of the world to celebrate the 50 years of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Minister of Environment Dr Jeanne d'Arc Mujawamariya delivered the

following remarks during the Special Session of the UN Environment Assembly to Commemorate the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Establishment of UNEP:

Excellencies,

It is my pleasure to join you today for this important event as we celebrate 50 years of the UN Environ-

ment Programme. It is an honour to represent His Excellency, President Paul Kagame, who sends his congratulations on 50 years of UNEP.

Rwanda has put the environment at the heart of its development agenda for more than two decades. From nature conservation of protected areas to setting ambitious targets to address the climate crisis and laws and actions to curb plastic pollution. We understand the power of nature and the need to protect it.

Fifty years ago, UNEP was created as the world's environmental conscience - the anchor institution for the global environment that identifies problems, suggests policies, connects countries, and promotes collective action. The pandemic has reminded us of our interconnectedness and the transboundary nature of environmental issues that requires a global framework such as UNEP to coordinate efforts to achieve tangible results.

One of UNEP's key achievements has been the reversal of the depletion of the ozone layer through its leadership in the creation of the Montreal Protocol. Rwanda is proud to have expanded that work through the Kigali Amendment and to have played a role at this UNEA in the process toward a new international legally binding agreement on plastic pollution. We look forward to working together to achieve similar success in the years ahead.

Rwanda has a vision for the next 50 years, and we hope that when we

celebrate UNEP@100, we will see:

- The global environment at the centre of our way of life - no matter where we live
- A climate resilient planet
- A world with zero plastics in nature

Rwanda is pleased to engage with UNEP, academia, and other UN member states in assessing the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements, learning from successes as well as gaps, and charting a vision for the future.

We welcome UNEP's leadership in convening constituencies, connecting ideas, and spearheading meaningful action in global environmental governance.

To conclude, I would like to once again thank the UNEP leadership and team for your dedication to the protection of our planet. We are grateful for your service, and look forward to continuing our strong collaboration in the years ahead.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Rwandan Drivers urged to beat vehicle air pollution

Rwandan car and motorbike drives, as well as machinery owners, are called on to be part of the solution to air pollution by servicing their vehicles, avoiding unnecessary trips, turning off their engines when stationary and buying electric and hybrid vehicles.

The campaign is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Environment through the Rwanda Environment Management Authority, the Rwanda Standards Board, Rwanda Space Agency and Rwanda National Police.

Rwanda's First Biennial Update Report under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in December 2021, as well as the Third National Communication in 2018 both indicate that the country's greenhouse gas emissions from road transport were dominated by cars and motorcycles. A study published by REMA in December 2017 showed that vehicle emissions are the biggest contributor to poor air quality in Rwanda's cities.

Most of the time, highly polluting vehicles and machinery are those which have not been properly or regularly serviced or use fuel that does not comply with national standards. The new campaign, called *Ikinyabiziga kizima, umwuka mwiza* (Healthy Vehicle, Clearer Skies), encourages owners to service their vehicles and ma-

chinery and only purchase high quality fuel. Doing so will not only reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change, but also improve the quality of the air we breathe.

"Rwanda has built a nationwide monitoring system that provides real-time data on the quality of the air at twenty-three sites across the country. The system highlights the dominant air pollutants responsible for air quality degrada-

tion and only purchase high quality fuel. Doing so will not only reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change, but also improve the quality of the air we breathe.

ment Management Authority. "The number of vehicles on Rwanda's roads is expected to double by 2030 and so pollution, climate impacts as well as societal costs linked to congestion and health will also rise if we don't act now," she added.

During the campaign, mobile emissions testing were conducted in the City of Kigali as well as Huye, Rwamagana, Musanze



tion, and most of those pollutants are related to vehicular emissions and machines using fossil fuels like petrol and diesel. It is everyone's responsibility to regularly service their vehicles, use fuel complying with national standards, and shift from fossil-fuel powered vehicles to electric vehicles where possible to ensure clean air for all," said Juliet Kabera, the Director General of the Rwanda Environ-

and Rubavu districts. The public were also engaged through radio and TV talk shows, and encouraged to share their personal efforts to #BeatAirPollution on social media.

"The contribution of vehicles to the city's ambient air pollution cannot be ignored. All motor vehicles in Rwanda are required to undergo emissions inspection

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and testing at the Motor Vehicle Inspection Centre. Any vehicle that does not meet applicable emissions standards is not authorised to operate in Rwanda. The Traffic Police also has handheld vehicle emissions inspection using mobile equipment for on-the-spot emissions checks," said CP John Bosco Kabera, Spokesperson of the Rwanda National Police.

Air pollution is the leading environmental threat to human health. Today, 90% of people globally breathe polluted air and approximately seven million people die from air pollution related causes every year.

Air pollution costs the global economy US \$5 trillion in welfare costs annually and ground-level ozone pollution is expected to reduce staple crop yields by 26 per cent by 2030. In Rwanda, more than

2,200 deaths were attributed to ambient air pollution in 2012 and the number of hospital admissions for acute respiratory infections in health centres across the country increased to 3,331,300 in 2015, up from 1,682,321 in 2012.

To improve air quality, the health of all Rwandans and protect our environment, the Government of Rwanda enacted mandatory vehicle emissions testing in January 2015.

In 2019 and 2020, the Rwanda Standards Board published standards for air quality and emissions limits for road vehicles as well as automotive fuels equivalent to Euro 4.

Those standards serve as benchmarks for the control of air pollution, testing and inspection of vehicle emissions with a view

to protecting the environment, health and safety of the Rwandan population.

Under the Ministerial Order on air pollution and emissions, the owner or operator of a machine using petroleum products must service the machine and maintain it in line with the best technical practices to keep it within the authorised air pollutants emissions limits. Similarly, under the law on the preservation of air quality and prevention of air pollution in Rwanda, any person owning any means of transport of people and goods which is an emission source must control the production and emission of air pollutants.

Rwanda Air Quality Monitoring System

Website: www.aq.rema.gov.rw

Contact and follow us

 Inyota House KG7 AVE
Kigali, Rwanda

 Hotline: 3989

 www.rema.gov.rw

 info@rema.gov.rw

 @REMA_Rwanda

 @rema_rwanda

 Rwanda Environment Management Authority(REMA)

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communications@rema.gov.rw

