

'OVERWHELMING' SUPPORT FOR THIN PLASTICS BAN

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Public, political and scientific opinion has this week firmly aligned itself with a crackdown on thin and single-use plastics in Malawi.

Findings from an independent assessment - commissioned by the Malawi Government with support from UNDP and Lilongwe Wildlife Trust - were conclusive on the negative social, environmental and economic impacts of plastics pollution. The 64-page report was led by South African consultant, Dr Jane Turpie, and included an extensive review of international scientific studies to compliment interviews and data collected from 45 invited government, NGO and private sector contributors in Malawi.

At a press conference hosted today by the Malawi Parliamentary Conservation Caucus. Hon Commodius Nyirenda, MPCC Spokesperson, said, "The evidence is clear: if thin plastics use continues unabated we can expect degraded soils, worsening crop yields, reduced fish stocks, increased floods, declining human health and losses in tourism revenue. The assessment shows that Malawi is in fact behind many other countries in terms plastic usage - and thank goodness, because it is clear that thin plastics equate to pollution not progress. Let us take swift and decisive action before it is too late."

Andrew Spezowka, Portfolio Manager at UNDP for Resilience and Sustainable Growth, said, "Tackling plastic pollution is crucial to achieving sustainable development, which is why targets on this issue are woven into the UN's Sustainable Development Goals." He noted that, "the Government of Malawi demonstrated its progressive approach to environmental protection by banning thin plastics in 2014 and we welcome Malawi joining the growing number of countries across Africa that are tackling plastic pollution and upholding a common vision for a cleaner, safer and more prosperous future."

An estimated 75,000 tonnes of plastic is currently produced in Malawi each year, of which 80% is single-use plastic that cannot be recycled.¹ Plastics production has roughly doubled globally in the past 30 years. 300 million tons of plastic waste are now produced every year, almost equivalent to the weight of the entire human population. The majority of plastic waste ends up in in landfills, dumps and the environment. Only 9% of the nine billion tonnes of plastics ever produced have been recycled, the rest ending up in landfills, dumps or polluting land, rivers, and oceans.² Plastic waste can persist in the environment for centuries and Malawi's waste management solutions are not equipped to handle current, let alone projected, waste production.

The international community have recognised the urgency and gravity of the matter. As of 1 March 2019, lightweight plastic bans have been introduced in 62 countries. Last month, the European Union voted to ban single-use plastics across Europe by 2021.

The publication of Malawi's report precedes a Supreme Court hearing on 16 April that will determine whether the ban should be reinstated. The ban was first introduced by the Ministry of Natural Resources, Energy and Mining in 2015, prohibiting the manufacture, importation, distribution and use of thin plastics of less than 60 microns. Since then, legal challenges mounted by the plastic industry have successfully overturned the ban.

¹ *Addressing Plastic Pollution in Malawi: Review and Recommendations*, April 2019. Report commissioned by UNDP, Lilongwe Wildlife Trust and Environmental Affairs Department. Available upon request.

² <https://www.unenvironment.org/interactive/beat-plastic-pollution/>

The plastics industry's position, however, is not supported by the public. In a survey of over 1,500 people, 95% of people stated that they believed plastic pollution to be a serious issue in Malawi and 94% of people agreed with the ban.³

The executive summary for the assessment 'Addressing Plastic Pollution in Malawi: Review and Recommendations', is available upon request. For more information, please contact the Secretariat for the Malawi Parliamentary Conservation Caucus, on +265(0)993800289, or kate@internationalconservation.org.

About Malawi Parliamentary Conservation Caucus

The Malawi Parliamentary Conservation Caucus is a membership body which aims to 'provide a non-partisan platform for Malawi's parliamentarians to engage meaningfully on the value of conservation and natural resource management for the future prosperity of Malawi.' It was launched under Presidential mandate in 2015 and H.E. President Peter Mutharika currently stands as patron.

About UNDP

Today's development challenges are complex and each context is different. That's why UNDP tailors our work to fit the needs of the countries and communities we serve. UNDP's Strategic Plan (2018-2021) has been designed to be responsive to the wide diversity of the countries we serve. The diversity is reflected in three broad development contexts: eradicating poverty; structural transformations; and building resilience. To respond to these issues and focus resources and expertise to deliver on the 2030 Agenda, UNDP prioritizes six Signature Solutions: Keeping people out of **POVERTY**; **GOVERNANCE** for peaceful, just, and inclusive societies; Crisis prevention and increased **RESILIENCE**; **ENVIRONMENT**: nature-based solutions for development; Clean, affordable **ENERGY**; and women's empowerment and **GENDER** equality. Each Solution includes a mix of policy advice, technical assistance, finance, and programmes. Each solution has the potential to unlock the path to sustainable development. But no one solution will succeed on its own. We need all of them to achieve the SDGs.

About Lilongwe Wildlife Trust

Lilongwe Wildlife Trust (LWT), established in 2009, is a Malawi-based conservation NGO working to protect Malawi's biodiversity for the benefit of its people and wildlife. In collaboration with local and international partners, LWT responds to urgent conservation challenges as well as drive long-term social and institutional change across a number of areas including illegal wildlife trade, deforestation and plastics pollution. LWT has been appointed by the Government of Malawi to administer a number of national wildlife management, justice, and advocacy initiatives, and they are also a member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the Malawi representative for the Species Survival Network, and the Secretariat for the Malawi Parliamentary Conservation Caucus. For more information visit www.lilongwewildlife.org.

³ The online survey, conducted by Lilongwe Wildlife Trust, ran between 04.04.19 - 08.04.19 and reached 1,554 people.