



Botswana Climate  
Change Network

Empowering communities for meaningful climate action

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## Botswana Youth Declaration on Plastic Pollution

### Introduction:

We, the youth of Botswana, recognizing the urgent threat posed by plastic pollution to our environment, health, and future, come together on this World Earth Day, 22nd April 2024, to express our commitment to combating plastic pollution.

Recalling the July 2022 United Nations General Assembly's decision recognizing the human right to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment<sup>1</sup>, and the UN Human Rights Council resolution 48/13 which acknowledged the right in October 2021<sup>2</sup>. We, the youth of Botswana, reaffirm our commitment to uphold and advocate for these fundamental rights as we address the pressing challenges of plastic pollution.

### Acknowledgment of the Problem:

In Botswana, the impact of plastic pollution is profound and pervasive, affecting our natural landscapes, wildlife, and communities. It has been estimated that Botswana produces 838.27 tonnes<sup>3</sup> of plastic/paper waste. This only accounts for salvaged waste, and represents 55.29% of all waste salvaged from waste management facilities in Botswana.

Despite past legislative efforts, such as the proposed plastic ban under Statutory Instrument No. 74 of 2018<sup>4</sup> and the plastic levy, effective implementation and enforcement have failed. This failure has resulted in continued plastic pollution and missed opportunities for sustainable waste management and the promotion of the circular economy.

1. Our streets, waterways, and natural habitats are littered with plastic pollution. This persistent waste not only harms the beauty of our environment but also poses

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<sup>1</sup> UNGA, The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, A/RES/76/300, 2022, [Online](#)

<sup>2</sup> UNGA, HRC, A/HRC/RES/48/13, 2021, [Online](#)

<sup>3</sup> Statistics Botswana, Botswana Selected Environmental Indicators Digest, 2021, [Online](#)

<sup>4</sup> Government of Botswana, Waste Management (Plastic Carrier Bags and Plastic Flat Bags Prohibition), 2018, [Online](#)

severe risks to our wildlife and livestock, which often ingest or become entangled in plastic waste.

2. The initiatives intended to curb plastic usage have not been fully actualized. The plastic levy introduced was poorly managed and failed to deter plastic usage effectively due to non-compliance and lack of proper governmental collection mechanisms. The suspension of the plastic bag ban shortly after its announcement due to pushback from manufacturers and a lack of clear alternatives further illustrates the challenges of policy enforcement without thorough stakeholder engagement and preparation. The plastic levy, intended as a deterrent for plastic use, has inadvertently evolved to benefit primarily the retail sector in the private domain. The flaw in policy execution contributes to the continuing escalation of plastic pollution, contradicting the levy's original goal to limit plastic use.
3. Beyond environmental damage, plastic pollution also impacts the health of our communities. Contaminants from plastics(including PVC, PE, PET) leach into soil and water sources, contributing to a broader spectrum of health issues. It is estimated that 11 billion and 336 billion microplastic particles could be flowing into the Okavango Delta every year<sup>5</sup>. Microplastic pollution in our water bodies have implications for human health, not only affecting local communities relying on these waters for drinking and fishing but also the broader ecological systems that support biodiversity and agriculture
4. The visible presence of plastic pollution harms the aesthetic value of our surroundings, affecting tourism and local pride. Socially, the burden of managing and mitigating the effects of this pollution often falls on the most vulnerable communities, exacerbating inequality and social injustice.
5. The gravity of the plastic problem is not widely recognized within our national consciousness as a pressing environmental concern. Critical data on the extent and impact of plastic pollution within Botswana remains scarce, highlighting a significant gap in our understanding and response strategies. This lack of quantifiable data impedes our ability to formulate and implement effective solutions.

The issue of plastic pollution is not widely acknowledged as an environmental priority in Botswana. There is a profound need for increased awareness and education regarding the risks and realities of plastic waste, particularly considering the vulnerability of Botswana's ecosystems.

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<sup>5</sup> Keller, L., et al. (2023). Microplastic accumulation in endorheic river basins – The example of the Okavango Panhandle (Botswana). *Science of The Total Environment*, 874. [Online](#)

**Our Vision:**

We envision a Botswana free from the environmental, social, and economic impacts of plastic pollution. We believe in a future where our natural resources are no longer tainted by plastic waste, and where sustainable, circular practices and innovations lead our development.

**Commitments:**

1. We commit to advocating for the reinstatement and proper enforcement of the plastic ban. We call on policymakers to ensure that comprehensive, clear, and enforceable regulations are set in place and effectively communicated.
2. We pledge to increase awareness about the dangers of plastic pollution and the importance of recycling through campaigns, and school programs.
3. We aim to collaborate with local businesses and other partners to explore and promote alternatives to plastic usage that are sustainable and suitable for our economic context, including the promotion of the circular economy.
4. We encourage the undertaking of research to better understand the impacts of plastic pollution in Botswana and to develop localised solutions to mitigate these impacts.

**Call to Action:**

1. We urge all sectors of society to integrate sustainable practices into their operations and lifestyles. We particularly promote initiatives that transform waste into art, supporting visual artists and other creatives who contribute to recycling and upcycling through their work.
2. We call on the government and private sector to invest in infrastructure that supports waste reduction and management. We highlight the need for policies that support a circular economy, as demonstrated by other countries like Rwanda and South Africa. We advocate for the establishment of circular waste systems to replace linear manufacturing and consumption systems.
3. We urge political leaders to increase governmental will and action to advance sustainable waste management with clear and enforceable policies. In this election year, we urge political parties to reflect commitments to climate change, sustainable waste management and environmental protection in party manifestos.
4. We call for the reinstatement of the plastic levy. This levy should finance programs to support entrepreneurial initiatives by young creatives and entrepreneurs to enable youth participation in the circular economy.
5. We challenge private sector corporations to shift from single-use plastics to sustainable packaging solutions and stimulate consumer demand for eco-friendly products.

6. Alternatives to plastic should be economically viable and accessible to ensure that small enterprises can transition without economic hardship.
7. We call for the reinstatement of the Green-Scorpions program, to engage youth in enforcement systems regarding issues of waste management.
8. We urge entrepreneurship ecosystem builders and programs to encourage ecopreneurship in Botswana by creating opportunities for young people to develop products and sustainable replacement options for plastics. Programs should support youth-led initiatives and provide platforms for young innovators to showcase their solutions for a plastic-free Botswana.
9. We call on research institutions and universities to advance research that addresses the health risks associated with bioplastics and other plastic alternatives to ensure that new solutions do not perpetuate similar or new environmental problems.
10. Recognizing the critical role of waste reclaimers in our recycling ecosystems, we advocate for the integration of these workers into the formal waste management sector. This integration should include fair compensation, safe working conditions, and recognition of their invaluable contribution to reducing plastic pollution.
11. At the local and household levels, we call for the implementation of robust waste management mechanisms. This includes the establishment of systems for waste separation at home and efficient collection at the community level. These systems should be supported by innovative incentive schemes that reward communities and individuals for active participation in waste management practices.
12. We demand for commitments to a 60% reduction in the production of ALL plastics by 2040 in line with the imminent UN Treaty on Plastic Pollution, and encourage Botswana to sign the [Global Plastics Treaty Petition](#).

The urgency of the plastic pollution crisis demands immediate and sustained action. As the youth of Botswana, we are ready to lead the charge, embracing innovation and collaboration to ensure that the beauty and integrity of our country endures for generations to come.

Through this declaration, we voice our collective determination to foster a sustainable plastic-free future, holding ourselves and our leaders accountable to the commitments made herein.

**END.**

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For further information, partnerships, or media inquiries, please contact the Botswana Climate Change Network (BCCN) at:

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