



VIRTUAL WEBINAR

THEME

“MARINE PLASTIC POLLUTION GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA”

DATE: WEDNESDAY, 10th MARCH, 2021

VENUE: ONLINE ZOOM

BACKGROUND

Africa has joined the global movement for eliminating plastics. Several African countries, are now taking steps to eliminate the production and distribution of single-use plastics; some are even adopting a total ban on the production and use of plastic bags. Cameroon, Egypt, Eritrea, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritania, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa and Tanzania have taken the lead, others, like Botswana and Ethiopia, are following suit. Nigeria, being the most populous country in Africa is affected by plastic pollution menace. The reason is its large population in the urban and commercial cities, especially in the South east and south west of Nigeria and her large coastline. Lagos which is the biggest city in Nigeria has been under plastic pollution siege, without any hope of abatement. The WEBINAR intends to engage stakeholders in order to identify the problems of plastic pollution and how it affects the environment of Nigeria.

The focus of the WEBINAR is to articulate national, regional and global legislation, policies and strategies that will prevent plastics from getting in to the environment. The indiscriminate dumping of land waste materials such as bio degradable and non-bio degradable wastes of which plastic debris are inclusive find their way into the environment through the drainages, culverts, gutters and canals into adjoining rivers within the cities and towns, and consequently into the ocean. It is reported that the Imo River in the Eastern Nigeria discharges over 17,500 tons of plastic debris annually making it one of the world's most polluted rivers. It is important to note that the Imo River flows through the city of Aba carrying with it plastic debris through its adjoining tributaries until it finds its way into the nearby Atlantic Ocean.

The need to act timely in order to save the planet from plastic devastation cannot be over emphasized. The statistics are hideously looking gloom on the negative impact of plastic to the environment. It has been projected that, by 2050, there could be more plastic in the world's waters than fishes. Researchers have identified 400 species of animals whose members either ingested plastics or got entangled in it. Year in, year out, the plastics that are constantly thrown into the oceans are responsible for killing one million seabirds and 100,000 marine mammals. It has been canvassed that up to 13 million tonnes of plastic leak into our oceans every year.

GOVERNANCE – THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

UN Environment and its partners are working closely with African governments to establish policies and create programmes that are geared towards a plastic-free continent. The campaign *Beat Plastic Pollution* has mobilized the continent to come together and clean up plastics in land and water ecosystems. The campaign also encourages governments to adopt the initiative and come up with regulations to curb plastic pollution. As a corollary, on 21st May 2019, Nigeria House Nigeria's House of Representatives passed a bill banning the use and sale of plastic bags in the country. According to the legislation, anyone that fails to provide customers with paper bags in place of plastic ones risks three years in jail or a fine of

N500,000 - or both at the worst case scenario. The bill would have to be worked on by a conference committee of the House and Senate before being sent to the president for assent to become law.

One of the most visible challenges to this would-be law is that, in a complex and undeveloped country like Nigeria, this law may end up before another long essay in the statute books without any chance of optimizing its legal, jurisprudential and governance efficacy. The greater numbers of Nigerians are not aware that plastic pollution portends such an urgent threat to their very existence-the environment. The sensitization campaigns are still elitist and revolve around the major cities. It is a matter of regret that, plastic pollution campaigns in Nigeria are purely viewed from the elite point of view, and the fundamental clog, in the wheel of progress of any activity concerning plastic pollution is how to get the message to the masses at the grassroots and how to re-jig their consciousness towards accepting that, plastic pollution has the potential to irredeemably damage the environment to the point that, all social, economic, and political woes may be the direct consequences of actions or inactions that encourage plastics to get into the environment.

SUB THEMES

- A. Plastic pollution and the environment
- B. Plastic pollution and recycling
- C. Marine plastic and sustainable development
- D. Plastic waste and the circular economy
- E. Plastic, politics and governance
- F. Psychology and plastic dependency
- G. Plastic and ocean governance

LEAD PAPER PRESENTER:

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KEYNOTE SPEAKER:

Chief Sharon Ikeazor
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HOST:

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