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Continental Strategy for Control & Mitigation of Plastic Pollution on Aquatic Biodiversity & Environment in Africa



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Executive Summary

Context: Africa grapples with a significant plastic pollution crisis, marked by an estimated 17 million tonnes of mismanaged plastic waste generated each year. This pervasive issue inflicts substantial ecological harm upon the continent's vital marine and freshwater ecosystems, disrupting natural processes and degrading habitats. Furthermore, it results in considerable economic losses, estimated at £2.3 billion ($2.9 billion) annually, severely impacting the millions of livelihoods reliant on key sectors such as fisheries, aquaculture, and tourism. The infiltration of microplastics into freshwater systems and the degradation of crucial coastal habitats compound the threat to biodiversity, ecosystem functioning, and overall food security. Globalised value chains and environmental transport mechanisms such as ocean currents and rivers propel the transboundary nature of plastic pollution, amplifying the challenge.

Vision: To cultivate plastic-pollution-free aquatic ecosystems across Africa by the year 2040. This vision entails minimising the detrimental impact on aquatic biodiversity through the adoption and scaling of circular economic approaches. These approaches are designed to deliver tangible environmental, economic, and social benefits continent-wide, thereby positioning Africa as a global frontrunner in effective aquatic plastics governance. This strategic direction aligns with the broader international goal of fostering a sustainable and safe circular economy for plastics, aiming for zero harm to both human health and the environment.

Purpose: This strategy serves to provide structured, actionable guidance to African Union Member States (AU MS), regional institutions (including RECs), and diverse stakeholders. The core aim is to empower these entities in the development and implementation of their respective national and regional strategies. These strategies should clearly aim to effectively manage plastic Pollution and its harmful effects on water life, ecosystem health (including important fish populations), food security on land, income opportunities, and the sustainability of jobs that rely on these natural resources are being addressed. We are addressing the harmful effects of pollution on water life, ecosystem health (including important fish populations), food security on land, income opportunities, and the sustainability of jobs that rely on these natural resources. opportunities, and the sustainability of jobs that rely on these natural resources.

Key Targets: By 2040, this strategy sets forth ambitious, measurable objectives:

- Reduce the volume of mismanaged plastic waste entering Africa's aquatic ecosystems by 90%, benchmarked against 2019 levels. The task requires transformative changes in waste management infrastructure and practices.
- Achieve a significant reduction in microplastic contamination within key aquatic species, progressing towards an indicative target of ≤0.5 parts per million (ppm). This necessitates focused efforts on preventing microplastic release and potential remediation.
- Expand the coverage of vital mangrove ecosystems by 30% through targeted restoration and conservation efforts, enhancing coastal resilience and biodiversity.
- Decrease the production of virgin (new) plastics by 30%, promoting a shift towards recycled content and alternative materials.

- Cap greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with the entire plastic value chain (from production to disposal) at 2019 levels, decoupling plastic management from climate impacts.

(Note: These targets represent refined, measurable goals emerging from the strategy development process, evolving from initial broader aims like 75% microplastic elimination and 100% critical habitat restoration)

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1. Introduction

Africa stands at a pivotal moment in its development trajectory, with a continental commitment to harnessing its vast natural resources for sustainable and inclusive growth. The Africa Blue Economy Strategy (ABES) encapsulates this ambition for the aquatic environment, envisioning the sustainable use of oceans, seas, rivers, and lakes to drive economic transformation and improve livelihoods. The Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa (PFRS) offers clear advice on how to keep Africa's important fishing and fish farming industries productive, sustainable, and protected, which are key parts of the Blue Economy. The successful realisation of both strategic visions fundamentally depends upon maintaining the health, resilience, and integrity of Africa's diverse aquatic ecosystems.

However, environmental degradation significantly challenges achieving these aspirations, and the ABES framework acknowledges pollution as a particularly severe threat. Among the most pervasive and damaging forms of pollution confronting Africa's aquatic environments are those originating from plastics. The increasing amount of plastic waste and poor handling of it cause serious pollution, harming the environment and threatening the resources essential for both the ABES and PFRS goals.

Recognising that plastic pollution represents a major impediment to sustainable development across the continent, this Continental Strategy for Control & Mitigation of Plastic Pollution on Aquatic Biodiversity & Environment in Africa has been developed. It serves as a dedicated, comprehensive framework designed to address this specific challenge head-on. Providing structured guidance for coordinated action, this strategy acts as an essential supporting pillar, directly contributing to the environmental sustainability and resource conservation goals embedded within the ABES and required for the long-term viability of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors guided by the PFRS. Effectively controlling plastic pollution is thus an imperative for safeguarding Africa's natural heritage and securing the foundations for a prosperous blue economy.

The following sections detail the scale and multifaceted nature of the plastic pollution crisis facing Africa's aquatic environments, establishing the urgent need for the coordinated interventions outlined within this strategy.

1.1 Overview of the Crisis

Plastic pollution manifests as a dual environmental and socioeconomic catastrophe, impacting Africa's diverse aquatic ecosystems, from its large marine ecosystems (LMEs) to its extensive river and lake networks. The visible accumulation of large volumes of plastic waste in urban centres, agricultural lands, waterways, and coastal and marine environments underscores the scale of the challenge.

Impact on Livelihoods and Biodiversity: Coastal communities, heavily reliant on fishing, face severe economic hardship, with reported income losses exceeding 30% in some areas due to plastic waste damaging essential breeding grounds like coral reefs and mangroves. Marine fauna, including mammals, turtles, seabirds, and

commercially important fish, suffer significantly from entanglement in ALDFG and other plastic debris, leading to demonstrable population declines and diminishing fish availability for consumption and trade, thereby undermining food security and local economies.

Freshwater Contamination: The threat extends deeply into freshwater systems. Microplastic particles are being found more and more in lakes and rivers, with studies showing that up to 85% of the places tested are contaminated, moving through food chains by building up in important species like tilapia and Nile perch. Major river systems like the Congo, Nile, and Niger function as primary conduits, transporting vast quantities of plastic debris from inland sources to estuaries and the marine environment each year. This confirms that plastic pollution is not solely a coastal issue; landlocked nations also experience significant impacts, especially within urban and agricultural landscapes.

Economic and Health Implications: The pervasive pollution jeopardises crucial economic sectors, including Africa's significant fish export market (valued at approximately USD 7 billion). It degrades biodiversity, diminishes the climate resilience afforded by natural carbon sinks like mangroves and poses direct risks to public health through potential exposure to hazardous chemicals associated with plastics. The African Blue Economy Strategy (ABES) explicitly recognises fisheries, aquaculture, biodiversity conservation, and environmental sustainability as pillars of the continent's blue economy— continent's blue economy – all of which are fundamentally threatened by unchecked plastic pollution.

Future projections: Current trends present a stark picture: without decisive intervention, plastic leakage into aquatic environments could triple by 2040, and the total generation of plastic waste could surge dramatically, potentially reaching 116 Mt by 2060. This trajectory highlights the inadequacy of existing national policies and voluntary measures, which often lack the necessary coordination, scale, and lifecycle perspective. Effectively addressing the crisis requires tackling the entire plastics value chain—from its reliance on fossil fuels and use of toxic additives through problematic product design to unsustainable consumption patterns and inadequate end-of-life management.

1.2 Strategic Imperative

Confronting the escalating plastic pollution crisis is a continental imperative, intrinsically linked to the goals of the African Union's (AU) Agenda 2063 and its emphasis on developing a sustainable blue economy, as detailed in the Africa Blue Economy Strategy. Safeguarding the health and productivity of aquatic resources is paramount for the estimated 68 million African livelihoods that directly depend on activities like fishing, aquaculture, coastal tourism, and related water-based enterprises.

This strategy provides a framework for achieving key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and SDG 14 (Life Below Water). By addressing threats to fish stocks and promoting sustainable practices, it also directly contributes to SDG 2 (Zero Hunger).

Tackling the widespread problem of plastic pollution is essential not just for protecting water animals and their habitats but also plays a key role in helping meet the larger goals for saving and restoring biodiversity set out in the African Union Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (ABSAP) 2023-2030. By tackling a key driver of ecosystem degradation identified within ABSAP, this strategy directly supports Africa's commitment to halting and reversing biodiversity loss, particularly aligning with the objectives related to reducing pollution risks under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).

Developed in direct response to calls from stakeholders, including recommendations for AU-IBAR to lead a comprehensive effort, this strategy aims to catalyse a shift from fragmented, often insufficient national actions towards a coordinated, systemic, and harmonised continental response. Its core purpose is to equip AU Member States and regional bodies with structured guidance to formulate and implement robust national and regional strategies. These strategies must effectively control plastic and microplastic pollution while mitigating the associated negative impacts on the aquatic environment, biodiversity (including fish stocks), and dependent communities.

2. Foundational Frameworks

This strategy is strategically anchored within existing global and regional environmental governance structures, ensuring policy coherence and leveraging established commitments. It acknowledges that current frameworks, while valuable, are often fragmented and require strengthening and better coordination to effectively address the multifaceted challenge of plastic pollution.

Global Frameworks: Aligning with international mechanisms is crucial for accessing technical expertise, mobilising financial resources, and ensuring Africa's efforts contribute meaningfully to global solutions. Key frameworks include:

UN Global Plastics Treaty (expected 2025): This forthcoming legally binding instrument presents a pivotal opportunity to establish comprehensive global controls across the plastics lifecycle. This strategy is designed to anticipate and align with the Treaty's objectives, reflecting Africa's strong collective support for its development. Potential elements deemed important from an African perspective include a shared vision, mandatory national action plans, clear reporting metrics, dedicated scientific support, sustainable funding mechanisms, implementation assistance, inclusive stakeholder engagement, knowledge sharing platforms, and constructive industry engagement.

Basel Convention Amendments: These provide the international legal basis for regulating the transboundary movement of plastic waste, mandating environmentally sound management (ESM) and robust measures to prevent illicit trade and dumping. Strict adherence and enforcement are critical.

United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) Resolutions: Various UNEA resolutions on marine litter and microplastics provide important political impetus and guidance, notably encouraging the adoption of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes, promoting product redesign for circularity, and fostering

international cooperation on research and monitoring.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14.1: This target, aiming to significantly reduce marine pollution (including plastics) by 2025, serves as a vital near-term benchmark for progress.

Continental and Regional Frameworks: Africa possesses a suite of frameworks tailored to its specific environmental and developmental context. While a single, overarching continental strategy for all plastics may be nascent, numerous instruments address critical aspects:

AU Blue Economy Strategy (ABES): Explicitly identifies plastic pollution as a major hindrance to achieving a sustainable blue economy and provides a framework for the rational use and conservation of aquatic resources.

African Union Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (ABSAP): Effectively controlling plastic pollution is paramount for safeguarding the integrity and productivity of aquatic resources, which underpin key sectors of Africa's Blue Economy. This directly supports the vision articulated in the AU Blue Economy Strategy (ABES) and the objectives of ABSAP's Strategic Pillar B concerning the sustainable use of biological resources and the equitable sharing of benefits derived thereof. Mitigating the detrimental economic impacts of plastic pollution on fisheries, aquaculture, and tourism is thus essential for realising the continent's aspirations for sustainable growth and resilient livelihoods dependent on healthy aquatic ecosystems

Regional Seas Conventions (Abidjan & Nairobi): Offer legally binding mechanisms for protecting the marine and coastal environment from pollution within their respective geographic mandates.

African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN): Declarations and decisions emerging from AMCEN sessions consistently emphasise the need to combat plastic pollution through multi-stakeholder partnerships and unified support for global action. Notably, the 2019 STC on ARDWE specifically addressed plastic waste management challenges.

Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa (PFRS): Provides guidance for sustainable management of the fisheries and aquaculture sector, which is heavily impacted by plastic pollution.

Regional Economic Communities (RECs): Key bodies like ECOWAS, UMA, IGAD, ECCAS, CEN-SAD, SADC and EAC are increasingly incorporating environmental protection, pollution control (including solid waste and plastics), and sustainable resource management into regional policies and action plans (e.g., ECOWEP and EAPs), fostering regulatory harmonisation and capacity building among member states.

Bamako Convention: Reflects an early African commitment to controlling hazardous waste, including aspects relevant to plastic waste, and calls for global action.

Strategic Alignment: This strategy operates in concert with other key continental environmental frameworks, ensuring a coherent approach to sustainable development. It particularly complements the African Union Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (ABSAP) 2023-2030, which guides the continental implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). By addressing a significant pressure on biodiversity, this plastics strategy contributes directly to achieving the goals of the GBF within Africa and reinforces the environmental dimensions of Africa's Agenda 2063. Achieving the goals of this strategy requires enhanced coordination and harmonisation of actions undertaken within these diverse global, continental, and regional frameworks, resulting in a more unified and impactful continental approach.

3. Methodology

(This section outlines the evidence-based process used to develop the strategy and the phased approach planned for its execution)

The development of this strategy was underpinned by a robust, evidence-based methodology, ensuring alignment with the vision and objectives. Implementation will be guided by best practices in monitoring and assessment to ensure data quality and comparability across Africa.

3.1 Technical Approach (Strategy Development Phase):

Hotspot Mapping & Source Identification: Systematic identification and prioritisation of high-pollution areas (15+ major river basins, coastal zones, lakes) identified from desk-based studies of reports developed using multi-dimensional approaches including remote sensing, modelling, field surveys, waste audits, and citizen science. This critical step pinpointed key pollution sources (urban runoff, industrial discharge, agricultural plastics, fishing gear, dumpsites) and accumulation zones, enabling targeted interventions.

Stakeholder Matrix & Engagement: A comprehensive engagement process mapped and involved key stakeholders across the continent. This included governments, RECs, river basin organisations, municipalities, diverse private sector actors, research bodies, NGOs, CSOs, and, crucially, representatives from the informal waste sector. This approach utilises diverse expertise and promotes equitable representation, particularly for women and marginalised groups involved in waste management. Structured consultations and a stakeholder validation workshop and workshops were instrumental in gathering diverse perspectives.

Policy Gap Analysis: A thorough analysis benchmarked existing national policies against international standards (e.g., Basel) and global best practices (EPR, SUP bans, recycled content mandates). This analysis revealed common limitations in African national policies, such as a narrow scope, lack of harmonisation, data deficiencies, poor coordination, limited capacity, and insufficient inclusivity. The findings directly informed the development of adaptable model legislation and identified capacity-building priorities. Additionally, we evaluated the national institutional capacity for enforcement and implementation.

Monitoring & Assessment: Foundational work established the need for clear baseline metrics (for pollution in water, sediment, biota) and SMART indicators linked to strategic goals (biodiversity impact, health risks, source reduction). The approach emphasises harmonised monitoring methods to track spatiotemporal changes and ensure continental data comparability. The importance of standardised data collection and comprehensive metadata is emphasised.

3.2 Implementation Phases (Planned Execution – Aligned with Systemiq GRS Pathway):

Phase 1 (2025-2027): Laying the Foundation: This initial phase focuses on creating the necessary enabling environment. Key actions include assessing pollution levels in detail using standard methods, engaging a wide range of stakeholders to understand their needs, working on aligning policies such as supporting the adoption of the UN Global Plastics Treaty and creating example national laws, testing Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes in some countries, and starting specific projects in 10 pilot cities or areas to try out solutions like drainage traps and ways to involve the informal sector.

Phase 2 (2028-2033): Scaling Solutions: This phase focuses on expanding successful interventions and building critical infrastructure. Important steps include setting up five regional AUPC hubs to manage cross-border efforts; launching uniform EPR schemes across the continent with efficient fee collection; targeting a 10% reduction in new plastic use and a goal of 50% waste collection in urban areas; expanding successful pilot projects like drainage traps and clean-up technology; and encouraging reuse and refill business models.

Phase 3 (2034-2040): Full Transition and Optimisation: This final phase aims for continent-wide impact and a full transition to a circular economy. Actions include scaling up interventions and waste management infrastructure (collection, sorting, advanced recycling, controlled disposal) across all member states; deploying advanced monitoring technologies (remote sensing, blockchain) for improved governance; achieving ambitious 2040 targets (30% virgin plastic reduction, 85% urban collection, 75% recycling rate for collected plastics; implementing restrictions on primary microplastic sources; and consolidating efforts to realise microplastic sources; and consolidating efforts to realise the vision of plastic-pollution-free aquatic ecosystems supported by sustainable circular economy models.

4. Strategy Framework

4.1 Vision & Objectives

Vision: To achieve plastic-pollution-free aquatic ecosystems across Africa by 2040, leveraging circular economy principles to deliver integrated environmental, economic, and social benefits continent-wide. This mission entails drastically reduced plastic leakage, cleaner water bodies, restored ecological habitats, protected biodiversity, and enhanced, sustainable livelihoods for communities dependent on these resources.

Overall Objective: To provide structured, evidence-based guidance to AU Member States, regional institutions, and diverse stakeholders, enabling the development and implementation of effective, coordinated strategies for controlling plastic pollution and comprehensively mitigating its detrimental impacts on aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems.

Core Objectives (Quantified & Aligned): These goals turn the vision into specific targets that can be measured, matching up with global studies (like Systemiq GRS) and the agreement of stakeholders (such as the results from the WWF-AU Workshop).

Reduce virgin plastic use: Achieve a 30% reduction in the production and consumption of virgin plastics (from 2019 levels) by promoting upstream solutions like eliminating unnecessary packaging, substituting environmentally sound materials, and fostering innovative business models centred on reuse and refill systems.

Reduce Mismanaged Waste: Achieve a 90% decrease in plastic waste that is not properly handled by making big improvements in waste collection systems (like covering more areas, making them work better, and including informal workers), investing heavily in sorting and different recycling facilities (using mechanical and chemical methods when suitable), and improving waste management rules and practices.

Increase Circularity: Significantly raise the volume of recycled plastics produced and used (targeting a sevenfold increase) to replace new materials, which will generate economic value from waste and help reuse materials.

Climate Mitigation: Cap GHG emissions across the entire plastic value chain (production, transport, end-of-life) at 2019 levels, effectively decoupling necessary improvements in plastic management result from increased climate impacts, even amidst projected economic growth.

4.2 Prevention & Policy

This strategy prioritises upstream solutions, aiming to prevent plastic pollution at its source through the implementation of robust, coordinated, and harmonised policy interventions across the continent.

Phased Bans on Problematic Plastics (Target 2026-2028): Implement legally binding, coordinated, continent-wide or regional bans targeting the most environmentally damaging and unnecessary plastic items. This specifically includes microbeads intentionally added to cosmetics, a defined list of single-use plastic items where alternatives exist (e.g., plastic cutlery, plates, straws, stirrers, polystyrene food and beverage containers), avoidable plastic packaging components (including certain types used in fishing gear), oxo-degradable plastics which fragment without fully biodegrading, and potentially phasing out high-risk endocrine-disrupting chemicals (like BPA and certain phthalates) particularly in food contact materials.

Mandatory Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) (Target 2027-2030): Secure AU-wide agreement and drive national implementation of harmonised EPR legislation. EPR schemes must establish clear legal obligations making producers (including importers and brand owners) financially and/or operationally responsible for the collection, sorting, and environmentally sound management of their products and packaging at the end of their life. Critically, EPR fees should be modulated based on criteria such as recyclability, recycled content, and product durability to strongly incentivise eco-design and generate sustainable funding streams for necessary waste management infrastructure. Successful national EPR models within Africa (e.g., South Africa) and globally should be leveraged, while addressing common pitfalls of purely voluntary or narrowly focused schemes.

Economic Instruments (Target 2028): Introduce carefully designed economic instruments to internalise environmental costs and shift market behaviours. This includes exploring a harmonised continental tax or levy on virgin plastic production or importation (e.g., US$100/tonne suggested) to make recycled plastics more price-competitive and generate dedicated revenue for environmental programmes. Evaluate and potentially implement deposit-return schemes (DRS) for items like beverage containers to significantly boost collection rates.

Model Legislation & Standards: Develop and disseminate adaptable legislative templates for Member States. These templates should cover key policy areas: EPR frameworks, SUP bans (with clear definitions and scope), minimum recycled content standards for specific products, eco-design criteria, standardised and informative labelling requirements (regarding material composition, recyclability, and appropriate disposal), and regulations for adequate port reception facilities for fishing gear waste. These models should draw lessons from successful national laws (e.g., Rwandan/Kenyan bag bans) while promoting continental harmonisation.

Continental Coordination & Trade Regulation: Establish the AU Plastic Council (AUPC) as the primary intergovernmental mechanism for coordinating policy development, monitoring implementation progress, sharing best practices, and representing Africa in global negotiations. Simultaneously, strengthen regulations governing plastic production facilities and, crucially, the international trade in plastic waste. This requires rigorous enforcement of Basel Convention amendments and related controls to prevent Africa becoming a destination for waste dumping from other regions. Address weak enforcement of controls on cross-border movement of banned items within Africa.

4.3 Aquatic Protection Priorities

This pillar focuses on implementing targeted actions to directly protect and restore vulnerable freshwater and marine ecosystems and safeguard aquatic species from the physical and chemical impacts of plastic pollution. The targeted actions within this strategy for protecting and restoring critical aquatic ecosystems, such as mangroves and coral reefs, directly complement the ambitions set forth in ABSAP. Specifically, these efforts align with ABSAP's Strategic Pillar A, which focuses on strengthening biodiversity governance and practice, including commitments to restore degraded ecosystems (GBF Target 2) and effectively conserve vital inland water, coastal, and marine areas (GBF Target 3). Controlling plastic pollution is therefore positioned as an integral component of enhancing overall ecosystem resilience across Africa's aquatic environments.

Critical Ecosystem Protection & Restoration:

Mangroves: Initiate ambitious, large-scale restoration and conservation projects in critical mangrove areas (e.g., the Niger Delta and Mozambique), potentially utilising innovative physical barriers (e.g., filtration booms over significant distances) alongside community-driven planting and sustainable management practices. Implement systematic monitoring of plastic accumulation within these sensitive habitats. The overarching aim is a 30% net increase in mangrove cover by 2040.

Major Lakes & Rivers: Prioritise interventions in large, economically and ecologically significant lakes (e.g., Victoria, Tanganyika) and the 15 major river basins identified as pollution hotspots. Efforts must focus on reducing pollution loads through effective upstream source control (waste management, agricultural runoff control) coupled with appropriate remediation techniques (e.g., bioremediation), setting clear reduction targets (e.g., 50% reduction in Lake Victoria by 2030). Address drivers contributing to the shrinking of vital water bodies like Lake Chad.

Coasts & Coral Reefs: Engage the tourism sector by incentivising the adoption of plastic-free practices through dedicated certification programmes (aiming for 500+ certified operators). Implement specific measures to protect fragile coral reefs from physical damage (abrasion, smothering) and physiological stress caused by persistent plastic debris and ALDFG.

Species Recovery & Mitigation Plan:

Entanglement Response: Develop and operationalise rapid response protocols and networks for rescuing entangled marine animals, focusing efforts on identified high-risk areas and vulnerable indicator species (including marine turtles, mammals, seabirds, and large fish – potentially 20 key species).

Ingestion Monitoring: Establish systematic programmes to monitor plastic ingestion rates (both macro and microplastics) in carefully selected indicator species across different trophic levels (e.g., filter feeders like mussels, fish like tilapia/Nile perch, top predators like specific seabirds). Utilise standardised dissection and analysis methods to assess exposure levels, potential health impacts, and track progress towards the ≤0.5 ppm contamination target. Monitor the recovery trends of critical fish stocks potentially impacted by plastic-related habitat degradation or food web disruption.

Genetic Resilience: Initiate targeted research programmes to investigate the physiological impacts of microplastic exposure on key commercial or ecologically vital species (e.g., Nile perch) and explore potential avenues to understand and potentially enhance their genetic resilience to such stressors.

ALDFG Management: Implement comprehensive, multi-pronged programmes specifically targeting Abandoned, Lost or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG). This includes preventative measures (robust gear marking systems, accessible and affordable port reception facilities), mandatory reporting requirements for lost gear, and coordinated, targeted removal operations, especially in ecologically sensitive habitats like reefs and spawning grounds. This is critical given ALDFG's role as a major source of entanglement and persistent pollution.

4.4 Circular Water Economy

This strategic pillar focuses on catalysing the transition from the current linear 'take-make-dispose' plastic economy towards a truly circular model, where waste is minimised, resource value is maximised, and environmental leakage is prevented, particularly concerning aquatic ecosystems. This requires systemic changes across the value chain.

Promote Reduction & Reuse Systems: Place the highest priority on reducing unnecessary plastic consumption through targeted public awareness campaigns and supportive policy measures (e.g., levies on certain SUPs). Actively implement and aggressively scale up innovative reuse and refill business models (drawing inspiration from initiatives like Ghana's National Plastic Action Partnership - NPAP) for packaging and other suitable applications. The goal is to replace a significant portion (target 20%) of single-use plastics (SUPs) with durable, reusable alternatives by 2035.

Develop & Deploy Sustainable Alternatives: Invest in and support the research, development, and responsible deployment of safe, effective, and preferably locally sourced biodegradable or compostable materials (such as those derived from agricultural residues, e.g., Rwanda's papyrus initiative). These alternatives should be targeted for specific applications where reuse is impractical and where appropriate end-of-life management infrastructure (e.g., industrial composting) exists or can be realistically established. The aim is to replace a substantial portion (target 46%) of virgin plastic demand with a combination of these alternatives and recycled materials. Promote the adoption of biodegradable fishing gear where technically feasible and environmentally beneficial (target 40% adoption by 2030). Address existing knowledge gaps concerning the full environmental lifecycle and potential impacts of alternative materials.

Implement Urban & Riverine Solutions: Mandate and financially support the widespread adoption of proven pollution capture technologies within urban environments. This includes solutions like stormwater drainage traps and filtration systems designed to capture a high percentage (>90%) of macro- and meso-plastics before they enter rivers and lakes (target implementation in 50 major cities). Utilise innovative financing mechanisms, such as river clean-up credits or plastic bonds (potentially integrated with Blue Bonds), to mobilise significant private and public investment (target $1.8 B innovative financing mechanisms, such as river clean-up credits

or plastic bonds (potentially integrated with Blue Bonds), to mobilise significant private and public investment (target $1.8B) for large-scale remediation projects targeting rivers and lakes already burdened with pollution.

Integrate Eco-Design Principles: Collaborate proactively with industry stakeholders (manufacturers, designers, brand owners) to embed circularity principles deeply into product design processes (Design for Environment - DfE). This entails designing products for enhanced durability, ease of repair, and improved recyclability (e.g., using mono-materials, standardising polymers, avoiding problematic additives and colours). Critically, it also involves minimising the use of hazardous substances throughout the product lifecycle, thereby reducing risks during use and end-of-life management.

4.5 Waste Management Infrastructure

Addressing the critical deficit in waste management infrastructure across Africa is fundamental to achieving the strategy's goals. This requires ensuring effective systems for collection, sorting, recycling, and the safe, controlled disposal of residual plastic waste, moving beyond the currently strained and often inadequate systems.

Expand Collection and Build Regional Hubs: Significantly expand the reach and efficiency of formal waste collection services, particularly targeting underserved urban peripheries and coastal communities (aiming for 85% urban coverage by 2040). The strategy will emphasise the creation of safe, fair, and effective ways to officially include the important work done by the informal waste sector, making sure they receive fair pay, access to social benefits, protective gear, and acknowledgement in EPR schemes. Concurrently, plan and construct approximately 10 strategically located, large-scale, regionally managed hubs for controlled disposal and advanced recycling by 2030. These hubs should be prioritised in nations with high waste generation or leakage rates (e.g., Nigeria, DRC, Ethiopia suggested) to achieve economies of scale for sophisticated sorting, high-quality mechanical recycling, Potentially, chemical recycling, when feasible and environmentally sound, should be considered, along with viable and environmentally sound), and the safe management of non-recyclable residues.

Implement Advanced Tracking & Monitoring: Deploy appropriate and cost-effective technologies, potentially including blockchain systems, to enable transparent and verifiable tracking of plastic waste flows. This tracking should ideally cover waste from collection points through sorting facilities, recycling processes, and final disposal sites. Such systems enhance accountability, support the effective management of EPR schemes (by tracking obligated materials), and critically, help combat illegal dumping and waste mismanagement. Implement standardised systems for monitoring key metrics like waste generation rates, waste composition, collection coverage, and recycling performance at national and regional levels to address the current lack of common reporting frameworks.

Develop Integrated Waste Management Plans (IWMPs): Require and offer technical help to create and carry out detailed, locally appropriate Integrated Waste Management Plans (IWMPs) for all major cities and important river basins. These plans must adopt the internationally recognised waste hierarchy (prioritising

prevention, then reduction, reuse, recycling, recovery, and finally disposal). IWMPs should actively promote public-private partnerships (PPPs) for service delivery and infrastructure development and fully integrate circular economy principles.

Establish Minimum Infrastructure Standards: Develop, adopt, and enforce minimum technical and environmental standards for all types of waste management infrastructure. This includes standards for collection vehicles, transfer stations, material recovery facilities (MRFs), recycling plants, and engineered landfills, adapted to different local contexts (urban, rural, coastal). These standards are essential to ensure environmental protection (e.g., preventing leachate contamination), occupational health and safety, and operational efficiency.

4.6 Remediation & Pollution Capture

While prevention is paramount, measures are also required to address the legacy of plastic pollution already contaminating ecosystems and to intercept ongoing leakage before it disperses and causes further harm.

Microplastic Filtration & Removal: Actively research, pilot, and, where feasible, implement advanced filtration technologies (e.g., membrane filtration and biofiltration systems) at critical points. Potential locations include major urban rivers (like the Nile and Congo near large cities) and the outlets of wastewater treatment plants, with the ambitious aim of reducing microplastic loads entering sensitive downstream aquatic environments by 90% by 2040.

Marine & Freshwater Litter Cleanup: Establish and implement a coordinated, continent-wide program Establish and implement a coordinated, continent-wide programme for regular marine and freshwater litter removal campaigns. It is crucial that these programmes utilise harmonised methodologies (based on established guidelines like GESAMP/MPRL) for surveying and removing litter from shorelines, surface waters, and potentially impacted benthic environments. This harmonisation ensures that the data collected is comparable across regions and effective over time. Clean-up programmes should prioritise the removal of high-impact items, particularly ALDFG, be designed to create local employment opportunities, and systematically integrate collected data (types, amounts, locations) back into source identification efforts and prevention strategies.

Ecosystem Restoration Fund: Establish and secure adequate, sustainable financing for a dedicated restoration fund. This fund will support projects specifically targeting the ecological recovery of aquatic ecosystems heavily impacted by plastic pollution (e.g., Lake Tanganyika, specific mangrove forests like the Niger Delta, key river estuaries). Restoration efforts should be undertaken in conjunction with, or following, significant pollution removal activities.

Deploy Pollution Capture Technologies: Promote and strategically deploy proven passive and active pollution capture technologies (e.g., river booms, bubble barriers, static waste traps) at known and mapped leakage points. Priority locations include major urban drainage outfalls, river mouths entering sensitive areas, and identified coastal accumulation hotspots. The goal is to intercept floating debris, especially larger items, before it can disperse widely into marine or large freshwater systems.

4.7 Economic & Financial Mechanisms

Establishing sustainable financial flows and leveraging market-based instruments are critical to driving the transition towards a circular economy and funding the substantial investments required for infrastructure and interventions. Overcoming financial constraints is a key enabling factor for this strategy.

Leverage Public Expenditure Savings: Systematically quantify and actively communicate the potential long-term public expenditure savings that result from effective plastic pollution control. These savings accrue from reduced costs in areas like healthcare (related to pollution impacts), tourism loss mitigation, disaster management (reduced flooding from blocked drains), and direct cleanup expenses. The aim is to build a strong economic case for preventative investment and potentially redirect these future savings towards funding preventative infrastructure and sustainable waste management systems.

Continental Virgin Plastic Levy: Introduce a harmonised continental tax or fee levied on the production or importation of virgin plastics (a rate of US$100 per tonne has been suggested internationally). This instrument serves multiple purposes: it internalises some of the environmental externalities associated with virgin plastic, enhances the price competitiveness of recycled plastics, and generates a dedicated revenue stream that can be channelled into environmental funds (like the proposed Blue Fund) or national waste management budgets.

African Plastic Credit Mechanism: Develop and launch a credible, transparent, and independently verifiable African Plastic Credit mechanism. This market-based instrument would allow corporations and other entities to invest in projects that demonstrably collect, recycle, or enable the reuse of plastic waste beyond their own operational footprints or regulatory obligations. Such credits could be used to meet voluntary corporate sustainability commitments or potentially, under specific regulated conditions, to offset unavoidable plastic use.

Create an Enabling Environment for Investment: Foster a conducive environment for significantly increased private sector investment in the circular economy for plastics. This involves providing targeted incentives (such as tax breaks, subsidies, access to finance, loan guarantees) for businesses investing in critical areas like collection infrastructure, advanced sorting facilities, state-of-the-art recycling technologies (both mechanical and chemical, where appropriate), the development and scaling of sustainable alternative materials, and the establishment of viable reuse systems. Mandating and effectively implementing robust EPR schemes (as detailed in Section 5.2) is also crucial as it provides a more predictable funding base for the recycling value chain. Explore the feasibility of establishing dedicated investment funds targeting SMEs operating within the sector.

5. Cross-Cutting Priorities

5.1 Climate Alignment

The intrinsic link between the plastic lifecycle, which relies heavily on fossil fuels, and climate change demands integrated policy action across Africa. Plastics contribute significantly to global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (estimated at 1.7 Gt CO□eq globally in 2015, with projections for sharp increases), underscoring the climate mitigation potential of addressing plastic pollution. Furthermore, plastic pollution itself degrades vital natural carbon sinks like mangroves and seagrass beds, compounding the climate challenge.

5.1.1 Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement:

- African nations should be actively encouraged to incorporate ambitious plastic reduction targets, particularly focusing on virgin plastic production and consumption, along with circular economy measures, directly into their NDCs submitted under the Paris Agreement.
- This integration should emphasize the significant co-benefits for climate mitigation, aiming to keep the plastics sector's emissions well below business-as-usual projections and contributing to the overall goals of the Paris Agreement (e.g., limiting warming to 1.5°C).
- While specific integration is still emerging, some African NDCs already include actions in the related waste management sector, providing a foundation to build upon.

5.1.2 Leveraging the Global Plastics Treaty Negotiations:

The ongoing negotiations for a legally binding global plastics treaty offer a critical opportunity to reinforce national and continental efforts. Key climate-relevant proposals being discussed align well with integration needs:

- ***Full Lifecycle Approach:*** The treaty aims to address plastics from raw material extraction to end-of-life, acknowledging the upstream emissions intensity, which supports a comprehensive view within climate policy.
- ***Production Reduction:*** Strong proposals exist for binding targets to reduce virgin plastic production globally, reinforcing the need for similar national targets within NDCs.
- ***Climate Goal Alignment:*** Discussions include linking the treaty's objectives and financial mechanisms explicitly to climate goals, supporting the rationale for integrating plastic policies into broader climate strategies.
- ***Circular Economy:*** The treaty's focus on promoting a circular economy aligns with prioritizing resource efficiency and reducing reliance on virgin production.

5.1.3 Prioritizing Low-Carbon Solutions:

National climate and plastic policies should strategically prioritize waste prevention, reuse models, and efficient mechanical recycling. These approaches generally have lower carbon footprints compared to virgin plastic production and other end-of-life options like energy recovery or certain chemical recycling pathways.

5.1.4 Utilizing Existing Frameworks (BRS Conventions):

- While integrating plastics into climate policy, existing international agreements like the Basel Convention (part of the BRS Conventions) remain integral for managing the transboundary movement and environmentally sound management of plastic waste. National policies should ensure coherence between climate objectives and obligations under these waste-focused conventions.

5.1.5 Continental Leadership:

By integrating ambitious plastic pollution control measures into national climate policies and NDCs, Africa can position itself as a proactive leader in tackling the interconnected global challenges of plastic pollution and climate change. This leadership can be asserted within international fora, including the UN Plastics Treaty negotiations and UNFCCC processes, advocating for solutions that deliver both environmental protection and climate mitigation benefits.

5.2 Gender & Social Inclusion Framework

A core principle of this strategy is to address the disproportionate impacts of plastic pollution on vulnerable populations, particularly women, and to ensure that the transition towards a circular economy is equitable and inclusive.

Health Equity:

- Advocate for and implement policies that restrict or ban endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs) commonly found in plastics, especially targeting food packaging and products frequently used by women and children, to safeguard reproductive and developmental health.
- Implement nationwide public health awareness programmes specifically designed to educate women on the potential risks of plastic-related chemical exposure, particularly during pregnancy, and provide practical guidance on minimising such exposure.

Economic Empowerment & Formalisation:

- Develop and implement targeted programmes aimed at formalising the informal waste sector, where women often constitute a majority of the workforce. Set ambitious targets for formalisation (e.g., 500,000 waste pickers by 2030), ensuring fair wages, access to social protection systems (health insurance, pensions), provision of safe working conditions and personal protective equipment (PPE), and meaningful integration into formal collection and EPR schemes. Explicitly address the current lack of recognition and often precarious conditions within the informal sector.
- Establish specific quotas or targets (e.g., ensuring at least 50% participation and benefit for women) within these formalisation programmes to guarantee gender equity.
- Actively support the development and strengthening of gender-sensitive waste picker cooperatives, promoting shared leadership models and facilitating access to finance, training, and market opportunities.

Decision-Making Parity:

- Commit to and rigorously monitor specific targets for women's representation in leadership positions within all plastic governance structures, from local committees to the continental AUPC (aiming for at least 40% women's representation in AUPC leadership by 2027).
- Establish a dedicated Youth and Women's Advisory Board to provide direct input into strategy implementation, monitoring processes, and accountability mechanisms, ensuring their voices are heard and integrated. Guarantee inclusive engagement protocols for youth and women's organisations throughout the strategy lifecycle.

Education and Capacity Building:

- Implement targeted programmes specifically designed to build relevant skills and create tangible opportunities for women within the emerging circular economy. Aim to train and certify a significant number of women (e.g., 100,000 by 2030 target) in areas like plastic recycling technologies, sustainable waste management operations, eco-entrepreneurship, and related green jobs.
- Allocate dedicated funding for scholarships and mentorship programmes specifically supporting women pursuing higher education and research in critical fields such as polymer science, environmental engineering, circular economy business models, and the development of sustainable materials.
- Ensure that all public awareness campaigns related to plastic pollution and circular economy are designed and delivered in a gender-sensitive manner, addressing the specific concerns and roles of both women and men.

6. Implementation Architecture

Effective execution requires a robust, multilevel governance structure that ensures coordination, resource mobilisation, inclusivity, and adaptability across the continent. This architecture must facilitate due process and support both policy negotiation and practical implementation.

6.1 Institutional Framework:

Continental Level: The African Union Plastic Council (AUPC) will be established as the central coordinating body. Its mandate encompasses overseeing policy harmonisation across Member States, monitoring progress towards continental targets, fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing (addressing existing knowledge gaps), managing a potential global clearing house mechanism, and representing Africa with a unified voice in global plastic governance forums. The AUPC will operate through five geographically defined regional hubs (North, West, East, Central, Southern Africa) to tailor approaches to regional specificities and support REC activities. It will be supported by a Scientific and Technical Advisory Body composed of independent experts (potentially linked with existing bodies like GESAMP) providing evidence-based guidance and validation, and potentially an African expert group to bolster negotiation capacity.

The institutional framework proposed herein, centered around the African Union Plastic Council's (AUPC) and its supporting structures, is designed to operate synergistically with the coordination mechanisms

established under other critical environmental initiatives, including those outlined in ABSAP. Effective liaison between the AUPC and bodies such as the Biodiversity Working Group for Africa will be essential to foster integrated environmental governance, avoid duplication of effort, and ensure that actions addressing plastic pollution are fully aligned with broader biodiversity conservation objectives across the continent.

Regional Level (RECs & RFBs): Regional Economic Communities (e.g., ECOWAS, COMESA, UMA, ECCAS, CEN-SAD, SADC, EAC) and other relevant regional bodies (e.g., River Basin Organisations, Regional Fisheries Bodies under the PFRS) are crucial intermediaries. Their responsibilities include coordinating implementation among their respective Member States, aligning regional action plans (like the ECOWAS EAP) with the continental strategy, facilitating essential transboundary cooperation on shared water bodies and waste trade control, and potentially hosting the AUPC regional hubs. Recognising the inherently transboundary nature of plastic pollution, the emphasis on regional coordination and cooperation through RECs and dedicated hubs complements the transboundary nature of plastic pollution, the emphasis on regional coordination and cooperation through RECs and dedicated hubs complements similar approaches advocated within ABSAP for the management of shared ecosystems and transboundary biodiversity challenges. A harmonised regional approach, fostered under both strategies, is crucial for effectively managing pollutants and conserving natural resources that span national borders.

National Level (PAUs): Plastic Action Units (PAUs) will be established or designated within relevant national ministries (e.g., Ministry of Environment) in all Member States. These PAUs are the primary national implementers, responsible for developing and executing National Action Plans aligned with the continental strategy, reflecting common but differentiated responsibilities and national circumstances. They will oversee the implementation of national policies (including EPR schemes), coordinate activities between national and sub-national authorities, manage national monitoring data collection and reporting, liaise with diverse national stakeholders, and serve as the main liaison point with the AUPC and respective regional hubs. Improving coordination between different government departments at the national level is also a key function.

Local Level (Community Engagement): Empowering local actors is critical for on-the-ground success. Support the establishment and capacity building of Community Water Guardians (aiming for 10,000 by 2030) – these could be existing CSOs, community groups, or newly formed entities – to lead vital local initiatives such as clean-ups, source reduction campaigns, citizen science monitoring, and local awareness-raising. Develop clear national guidelines and provide resources to facilitate the integration of the informal waste sector into formal municipal waste management systems, ensuring fair compensation, safe working conditions, and access to opportunities.

6.2 Financial Mechanisms: Establishing clear, sustainable, and accessible funding mechanisms is paramount.

Blue Fund: Explore the creation of a dedicated continental "Blue Fund". Potential financing sources include innovative mechanisms like a small levy (e.g., 0.5% suggested) on relevant maritime industries, revenue from continental plastic taxes/fees, portions of EPR revenues, or other Member State and donor contributions. This

fund would prioritise financing large-scale, potentially transboundary, infrastructure projects (e.g., regional recycling hubs, port reception facilities) and significant marine/riverine litter reduction and ecosystem restoration programmes.

Innovation Pipeline Fund: Create a dedicated fund (aiming for an initial pool of US$500M) supported by public-private partnerships and international donors. This fund will specifically provide grants and seed funding for research, development, piloting, and scaling-up of innovative solutions tailored to the African context. This includes developing biodegradable/compostable materials, sustainable packaging designs, appropriate advanced recycling technologies, and novel monitoring tools.

Gender Lens Financing: Explicitly integrate a gender perspective across all funding mechanisms. Commit to allocating a significant designated portion (target 40%) of strategy-specific funding (e.g., from the Blue Fund, Innovation Pipeline, and where feasible, EPR revenues) to directly support women-led businesses, community initiatives, and targeted capacity-building programs within the waste management and circular economy sectors.

Other Funding Sources: Actively pursue and coordinate a diverse portfolio of funding streams. This includes earmarking revenue generated from national and/or continental plastic taxes, fees, and EPR schemes; developing the African Plastic Credit Mechanism; strategically leveraging international climate finance (GCF, Adaptation Fund) and development aid by clearly demonstrating the links between plastic reduction and climate/biodiversity goals; accessing funding opportunities emerging from the Global Plastics Treaty implementation; and stimulating private sector investment through de-risking instruments and appropriate incentives.

7. Monitoring & Compliance

Robust mechanisms for monitoring progress, ensuring compliance, and enabling adaptive management are indispensable for the strategy's success. This requires employing harmonised methods (building on established frameworks like GESAMP/MPRL and developing), leveraging innovative tools, establishing integrated data systems, and defining clear institutional roles and responsibilities. A transparent reporting structure linked to practical monitoring is essential.

7.1 Aquatic Health & Environmental Indicators:

A core set of indicators must be monitored consistently across different environmental compartments (water, sediment, biota) using standardised protocols to assess strategy effectiveness and track ecosystem health improvements. Addressing the current lack of accurate, comprehensive, and comparable data is a foundational priority. Key indicator categories include:

Microplastics: Monitor abundance (particles per volume/mass) in water (using appropriate nets/pumps), sediments (via core/grab sampling and density separation), and biota (measuring ingestion rates in key indicator species). Standardised laboratory analysis (e.g., FTIR/Raman) must be used for reliable polymer identification.

Track progress towards the quantitative target (≤0.5 ppm or equivalent metric) in designated aquatic species by 2040.

Macro/Mesoplastics: Monitor the abundance and composition (types: bottles, bags, ALDFG etc.) of larger debris items. Methodologies should include standardised shoreline transect surveys (e.g., 100m visual counts using common classification lists like OSPAR/UNEP), surface water surveys (visual counts, net trawls), and potentially targeted benthic surveys in known accumulation zones or sensitive habitats (using trawls, ROVs, or diver surveys where appropriate). Tracking specific item types is crucial for evaluating the effectiveness of targeted policy measures like bans or EPR schemes.

Biotic Effects: Systematically monitor plastic ingestion rates (% of individuals affected and number/mass of items per individual) in chosen indicator species (representative seabirds, filter feeders, commercial fish) using standardised dissection protocols. Monitor entanglement rates, particularly from ALDFG, in relevant indicator species (mammals, turtles, seabirds) through established stranding networks and dedicated surveys. Monitor trends in the biomass recovery of approximately 15 critical fish stocks potentially impacted by plastic-related habitat degradation or broader ecosystem effects.

Habitat Recovery: Monitor the expansion of mangrove cover (aiming for 30% net increase by 2040) using a combination of remote sensing and ground-truthing methods. Include monitoring of plastic accumulation within mangrove ecosystems. Monitor key coral reef health indicators, including the prevalence of plastic entanglement and abrasion on corals.

Waste Management Performance: Track key national performance indicators, including total plastic waste generation estimates, formal waste collection rates (disaggregated for urban/rural coverage), recycling rates (ideally disaggregated by polymer type), and the estimated overall reduction in mismanaged waste, tracking progress towards the 90% reduction target by 2040.

7.2 Digital Tools & Technology:

Leverage appropriate technologies to enhance efficiency, transparency, and engagement in data collection, analysis, and reporting.

Plastic Flow AI & Remote Sensing: Utilise satellite and drone imagery, potentially combined with AI algorithms and hydrological models (like Plastic Flow AI), for large-scale mapping of plastic pollution hotspots, tracking plastic leakage plumes from major rivers (target 10 key rivers initially), and monitoring extensive accumulation zones in marine environments.

EcoWatch App & Citizen Science: Develop and deploy standardised mobile applications (e.g., "EcoWatch") to facilitate structured citizen science contributions. This can include reporting pollution incidents, collecting shoreline litter data according to standardised protocols (e.g., item counts, types, locations), and potentially monitoring specific species impacts (e.g., entangled animals). Robust data validation mechanisms are essential,

and safety features (e.g., for reporting gender-based violence risks during fieldwork) should be integrated.

Policy Tracker Dashboard: Establish and maintain a publicly accessible online dashboard providing real-time visualisation of the adoption and implementation status of key plastic policies (EPR, bans, levies, standards) across all AU Member States. This significantly enhances transparency and public accountability.

Gender Parity Index: Develop and systematically track a specific index designed to monitor women's representation and leadership roles within national and continental plastic governance structures, and potentially within related waste management and circular economy industries.

Other Technologies: Explore and, where feasible, deploy other relevant technologies. This could include blockchain for transparent and immutable waste flow tracking (supporting EPR verification and preventing fraud), advanced analytical techniques for more efficient microplastic analysis in laboratories, and integrated data platforms to manage and share monitoring information effectively across institutions and borders.

9. Conclusion & Next Steps

- This Continental Strategy offers a comprehensive and ambitious framework designed to systematically address the escalating plastic pollution crisis confronting Africa's invaluable aquatic ecosystems and the myriad livelihoods they sustain. By adopting a holistic, lifecycle approach—grounded in prevention, circularity, the establishment of robust waste management systems, targeted remediation efforts, and fundamentally inclusive governance—Africa can navigate a transition towards a more sustainable and resilient future.
- Effective implementation hinges upon the synergistic integration of global frameworks (like the UN Treaty and Basel Convention), coordinated regional action (led by the AU, RECs, and RFBs), committed national implementation (driven by PAUs and comprehensive National Action Plans), and rigorous monitoring guided by scientific best practices (such as GESAMP/MPRL guidelines). Key recommendations revolve around strengthening policy coherence, making strategic investments in essential infrastructure, fostering deeper regional collaboration, catalysing circular innovation, ensuring social equity (with a particular focus on gender equality), enhancing monitoring and data systems, building capacity across all levels, and mobilising diverse and sustainable financial resources.
- Immediate Action (by Q3 2025 / end 2026): The highest priorities are securing widespread AU Member State commitment to ratify and commence domestic implementation of the UN Global Plastics Treaty; formally establishing the AUPC and its regional hubs; launching the initial 10 city/catchment pilot projects; initiating comprehensive baseline monitoring using agreed harmonised protocols; establishing the central data repository; and preparing a coordinated African position for ongoing global negotiations.
- 100-Day Plan (Initial Phase Focus): Within the first few months of operationalisation, focus on finalising the five regional action blueprints that will guide REC and Member State efforts (target Dec 2025 / early 2026); developing practical toolkits to assist nations with policy alignment and EPR scheme implementation; and launching the first wave of essential capacity building modules.

- Legacy Goal (by 2040): The long-term aspiration is to fully achieve the strategy's core objectives (30% virgin plastic reduction, 90% mismanaged waste reduction, GHG caps); demonstrably restore key ecosystem health indicators (e.g., mangrove cover expansion, reduced microplastic impacts on biota); establish a vibrant and self-sustaining circular economy for plastics across the continent; and firmly position Africa as a recognised global leader in developing and implementing innovative and effective solutions for aquatic plastic governance.
- Realising this vision demands unwavering political will from leadership at all levels, committed multi-stakeholder collaboration encompassing government, industry, civil society and communities, sustained and strategic investment, and a commitment to adaptive management that is continually informed by rigorous monitoring and evaluation. Success will not only safeguard Africa's precious natural heritage and support sustainable development pathways but also make a significant contribution to achieving global environmental goals.

Appendixes

Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms

This glossary defines key technical and policy terms as used within the context of the Continental Strategy for Control & Mitigation of Plastic Pollution on Aquatic Biodiversity & Environment in Africa.

Abandoned, Lost or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG): Fishing equipment (such as nets, lines, pots, traps) that is no longer under the control of the fisher and remains in the aquatic environment. ALDFG is a significant source of plastic pollution, entanglement risk for marine life, and navigation hazard. Also known as 'ghost gear'.

Adaptive Management: A structured, iterative process of decision-making for resource management and policy implementation that aims to reduce uncertainty over time via system monitoring. It involves learning from the outcomes of management actions and adjusting future actions accordingly.

African Union Plastic Council (AUPC): The proposed central coordinating body at the continental level, responsible for overseeing policy harmonisation, monitoring progress, fostering collaboration, and representing Africa in global plastic governance forums under this Strategy.

Basel Convention: An international treaty (The Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal)1 designed to reduce the movements of hazardous waste between nations, and specifically to prevent transfer of hazardous waste from developed to less developed countries. Recent amendments specifically address plastic waste, requiring prior informed consent for the movement of most mixed or contaminated plastic waste streams.

Bioaccumulation: The gradual accumulation of substances, such as microplastics or associated chemicals, in an organism. This occurs when the organism absorbs the substance at a rate faster than that at which the substance is lost by catabolism and excretion.

Biodegradable: Material capable of being decomposed by bacteria or other living organisms and thereby avoiding pollution. In the context of plastics, 'biodegradable' requires careful definition regarding the conditions (e.g., industrial composting, marine environment) and timeframe required for complete decomposition without harmful residues.

Bioindicator: A species or group of species whose function, population, or status can be used to reveal the qualitative status of the environment. For example, monitoring plastic ingestion levels in specific seabirds or mussels can indicate the level of plastic pollution in their feeding grounds.

Bioremediation: A waste management technique that involves the use of organisms (e.g., microbes, fungi) to remove or neutralise pollutants from a contaminated site. In the context of plastics, research is exploring potential bioremediation pathways, although large-scale application is currently limited.

Blue Bonds: A type of sustainability bond specifically used to finance projects that benefit oceans and related ecosystems. Funds raised could potentially support marine plastic pollution prevention, clean-up, or infrastructure projects under this strategy.

Blue Economy: Sustainable use of ocean and aquatic resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and jobs while preserving the health of ocean and aquatic ecosystems. (As defined by the AU Africa Blue Economy Strategy).

Blockchain: A decentralised, distributed, and immutable digital ledger technology. In this strategy, it is proposed as a tool for transparent and verifiable tracking of plastic waste flows through the value chain (collection, sorting, recycling, disposal) to enhance accountability and combat illegal dumping.

Capacity Building: The process by which individuals, organisations, and societies obtain, strengthen, and maintain the capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time.2 In this strategy, it refers to enhancing skills, knowledge, resources, and institutional structures needed to implement plastic pollution control measures effectively.

Circular Economy: An economic model aimed at eliminating waste and promoting the continual use of resources. Circular systems employ reuse, sharing, repair, refurbishment, remanufacturing, and recycling to create a closed-loop system, minimising the use of resource inputs and the creation of waste, pollution, and carbon emissions.3 This contrasts with the traditional linear economy ('take-make-dispose').

Citizen Science: Scientific research conducted, in whole or in part, by amateur (or non-professional) scientists. In this strategy, it involves engaging the public in collecting data on plastic pollution (e.g., beach litter surveys, reporting pollution incidents) using standardised methods and digital tools.

Eco-design (Design for Environment - DfE): Designing products with consideration for the environmental impacts during their whole lifecycle, including raw material extraction, manufacturing, transport, use, and end-of-life (disposal or recovery). For plastics, this includes designing for durability, repairability, recyclability (e.g., using mono-materials), and minimising hazardous additives.

Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF): An approach to fisheries management and development that strives to balance diverse societal objectives, by taking into4 account the knowledge and uncertainties about biotic, abiotic, and human components of ecosystems and their interactions and applying an integrated approach to fisheries within ecologically meaningful boundaries.5

Endocrine-Disrupting Chemicals (EDCs): Chemicals that can interfere with endocrine (or hormone) systems at certain doses. These disruptions can cause cancerous tumours, birth defects, and other developmental disorders.6 Some chemicals used as plasticisers or additives (e.g., BPA, certain phthalates) are known or suspected EDCs.

Environmentally Sound Management (ESM): Taking all practicable steps to ensure that hazardous wastes or other wastes (including plastic waste) are managed in a manner which will protect human health and the environment against the adverse effects which may result from such wastes.7 (Definition based on Basel Convention).

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR): An environmental policy approach in which a producer's responsibility for a product is extended to the post-consumer8 stage of a product's life cycle.9 EPR schemes typically require producers (manufacturers, importers, brand owners) to finance or manage the collection, sorting, and recycling/disposal of their products and packaging placed on the market.

GESAMP (Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection): An advisory body established in 1969 that advises the United Nations (UN) system on the scientific aspects of marine environmental protection.10 GESAMP provides authoritative, independent, interdisciplinary scientific advice,11 including guidelines for monitoring marine litter and microplastics.

Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions: Gases in the Earth's atmosphere that trap heat. The main GHGs associated with the plastics lifecycle (which is largely based on fossil fuels) include carbon dioxide (CO□) and methane (CH□), emitted during raw material extraction, production, transport, and end-of-life management (e.g., incineration or landfill decay).

Harmonisation: The process of establishing common standards, procedures, regulations, or policies across different jurisdictions (e.g., countries within a REC, or across the AU) to ensure consistency, comparability, and facilitate cooperation or trade.

Hotspot: A specific geographic area identified as having a particularly high concentration of plastic pollution, high rates of plastic leakage into the environment, or significant ecological vulnerability to plastic impacts.

Informal Waste Sector: Individuals or small enterprises involved in waste collection, sorting, trading, and sometimes recycling, operating outside formal municipal waste management systems and often without legal recognition, social protection, or safe working conditions. Also referred to as waste pickers or reclaimers.

Integrated Waste Management Plans (IWMPs): Comprehensive plans developed (typically at municipal or regional level) to manage all waste streams within a specific area, considering the entire waste hierarchy and integrating various collection, treatment, recycling, and disposal options in an environmentally sound and economically efficient manner.

Just Transition: A framework developed by the trade union movement to encompass a range of social interventions needed to secure workers' rights and livelihoods when economies are shifting to sustainable production,12 including combating climate change and environmental degradation. In this strategy, it refers to ensuring that the shift away from problematic plastics and towards a circular economy is managed fairly and equitably, especially for workers and communities dependent on the current system (including the informal waste sector).

Lifecycle Approach: Considering all stages of a product's life, from raw material extraction, design, production, distribution, use, and end-of-life (reuse, recycling, disposal), when assessing environmental impacts and developing policies.

Large Marine Ecosystem (LME): Relatively large regions of the ocean (typically 200,000 km² or greater) encompassing coastal areas from river basins and estuaries out to the seaward boundary of continental shelves and the outer margins of13 major current systems. They are characterised by distinct bathymetry, hydrography, productivity, and trophically dependent populations.14

Macroplastics: Plastic items generally larger than 25 mm (or sometimes 5 mm, definitions vary) in their longest dimension. These are typically visible items like bottles, bags, containers, and larger fragments.

Mesoplastics: Plastic items intermediate in size between macroplastics and microplastics, often defined as being between 5 mm and 25 mm.

Microplastics: Small plastic particles generally defined as less than 5 mm in their longest dimension. They can be primary (manufactured at microscopic size, e.g., pellets/nurdles, microbeads in cosmetics) or secondary (resulting from the breakdown of larger plastic items).

Mismanaged Waste: Waste that is not formally managed and includes disposal in dumps or open, uncontrolled landfills; littering; or inadequate collection systems, leading to leakage into the environment.

MPRL (Marine Plastic Debris and Microplastics Regional Laboratory - often used in context with GESAMP): Refers to laboratories or guidelines focused on the analysis of marine plastic debris and microplastics, often implying adherence to standardised methods for comparability (as promoted by GESAMP).

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs): Climate action plans submitted by countries under the Paris Agreement, outlining their targets and strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate impacts. This strategy encourages integrating plastic reduction measures into NDCs.

Oxo-degradable Plastics: Conventional plastics containing additives designed to accelerate their fragmentation into smaller pieces (potentially microplastics) when exposed to heat or UV light, but without necessarily enhancing ultimate biodegradation. Often considered problematic as they can contribute to microplastic pollution.

Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs): Hazardous organic chemical substances that persist in the environment, bioaccumulate through the food web, and pose a risk of causing adverse effects to human health and the environment.15 Some additives used in plastics, or pollutants adsorbed onto plastics in the environment, can be POPs. Addressed globally by the Stockholm Convention.

Plastic Action Units (PAUs): Proposed national-level bodies within relevant ministries responsible for developing and implementing National Action Plans aligned with this Continental Strategy.

Plastic Credits: A market-based mechanism where entities can purchase credits representing a specific quantity of plastic waste collected and/or recycled beyond regulatory requirements, often used to meet voluntary corporate sustainability goals.

ppm (parts per million): A unit of concentration, often used by mass (mg/kg) or volume. In this strategy, the target ≤0.5 ppm refers to reducing microplastic contamination levels within the tissues of key aquatic species.

Recycling: The process of collecting and processing materials (in this case, plastic waste) that would otherwise be thrown away as rubbish and turning them into new products or raw materials. Includes mechanical recycling (processing plastic back into pellets for reuse) and chemical recycling (breaking down polymers into monomers or other chemical feedstocks).

Regional Economic Community (REC): Regional groupings of African states established to promote economic integration (e.g., ECOWAS, SADC, EAC, COMESA, IGAD, CEN-SAD, UMA, ECCAS). RECs play a key role in harmonising policies and supporting Member States in implementing continental strategies.

Single-Use Plastics (SUPs): Plastic items designed or intended to be used only once, or for a short period, before being discarded or recycled (e.g., plastic bags, straws, cups, cutlery, beverage bottles, food packaging).

Stakeholder: Any individual, group, or organisation that can affect or is affected by the achievement of an organisation's objectives or a specific issue (in this case, plastic pollution and its management). Includes governments, industry, civil society, communities, academia, etc.

Transboundary: Crossing national borders. Refers to pollution that originates in one country but causes impacts in another, or to waste that is moved from one country to another.

Upstream Solutions/Monitoring: Interventions or monitoring points located early in the plastics lifecycle or pollution pathway. Upstream solutions focus on preventing waste generation (e.g., reducing production, redesigning products). Upstream monitoring focuses on tracking plastic leakage closer to the source (e.g., in rivers, storm drains, at production facilities) rather than in the final receiving environment (e.g., the ocean).

Value Chain (Plastics): The full sequence of activities involved in creating and using a plastic product, from raw material extraction (fossil fuels), polymer production, product manufacturing, distribution, consumption/ use, to end-of-life management (collection, sorting, reuse, recycling, disposal).

Virgin Plastic: Plastic produced from new, non-recycled raw materials, typically petrochemical feedstocks derived from fossil fuels.

Waste Hierarchy: A framework prioritising waste management options according to what is best for the environment. The generally accepted hierarchy is: Prevention, (Preparing for) Reuse, Recycling, Other Recovery (e.g., energy recovery), and Disposal (e.g., landfill) as the least preferred option.

Waste Picker / Reclaimer: See Informal Waste Sector.

Appendix 2. Implementation Timeline:

A detailed Gantt chart or roadmap outlining key activities, specific milestones, designated responsible actors (institutions/groups), and clear timelines across the three implementation phases (as detailed previously).

ID	Task / Activity	Phase	Start Year (Est.)	End Year (Est.)	Duration (Years)	Key Responsible Actors	Notes / Milestones
1	Phase 1: Laying the Foundation	1	2025	2027	2.5	(Various)	Goal: Establish enabling environment
1.1	Establish AU Plastic Council (AUPC) & Secretariat	1	2025	2026	1.5	AUC, MS	
1.2	Establish 5 AUPC Regional Hubs	1	2025	2026	1.5	AUC, RECs	
1.3	Establish National Plastic Action Units (PAUs)	1	2025	2026	1.5	MS	In all Member States
1.4	Establish Scientific & Technical Advisory Body	1	2025	2026	1.5	AUPC, AUC	
1.5	Establish Youth/Women Advisory Board	1	2025	2026	1.5	AUPC	
1.6	Secure MS Commitments for UN Treaty Ratification	1	2025	2026	1.5	AUC, MS	Immediate Action
1.7	Develop/Disseminate Model Legislation & Standards	1	2025	2027	2.5	AUPC, AUC, Technical Experts	Templates for EPR, Bans, etc.
1.8	Develop National Policy/ EPR Toolkits	1	2026	2027	1.5	AUPC, AUC	
1.9	Finalise 5 Regional Action Blueprints	1	2025	2026	1	AUPC Regional Hubs, RECs, MS	Target: Early 2026 (100-Day Plan element)
1.10	Begin Implementing Phased Bans on Problematic Plastics	1	2026	2027 (Ongoing)	1.5+	MS, RECs	Target Window: 2026-2028
1.11	Conduct Comprehensive Baseline Assessments	1	2025	2026	1.5	PAUs, Research Institutions, AUPC Sci/Tech Body	Using harmonised protocols
1.12	Establish Central Data Repository	1	2025	2026	1.5	AUPC	
1.13	Deploy Initial Monitoring Tools	1	2026	2027	1.5	AUPC, PAUs	EcoWatch App, Policy Tracker
1.14	Launch Pilot Intervention Projects (10 cities/ catchments)	1	2026	2027	2	PAUs, Local Authorities, CSOs, Private Sector	Drainage traps, clean-ups, informal sector
1.15	Pilot EPR Schemes (Selected Countries)		2026	2027	2	PAUs, MS Governments	
1.16	Stakeholder Consultations & Capacity Needs Assessments	1	2025	2027	2.5	AUPC, RECs, PAUs	Ongoing throughout Phase 1
1.17	Launch Initial Capacity Building Modules	1	2026	2027	1.5	AUPC, RECs, Training Institutions	Policy, Monitoring, Gender

ID	Task / Activity	Phase	Start Year (Est.)	End Year (Est.)	Duration (Years)	Key Responsible Actors	Notes / Milestones
2	Phase 2: Scaling Solutions	2	2028	2033	6	(Various)	Goal: Scale up, build infrastructure
2.1	Roll out Harmonised EPR Schemes Continent-wide	2	2028	2030	3	MS, PAUs, AUPC	Target Window: 2027-2030
2.2	Implement Continental Virgin Plastic Levy	2	2028	2029	1	AUC, MS Finance Ministries	Target: 2028
2.3	Implement Coordinated Bans on Problematic Plastics	2	2028	2030	3	MS, RECs	
2.4	Strengthen Enforcement (Trade, Cross-border)	2	2028	2033	6	MS Customs/ Environment, RECs	Ongoing
2.5	Construct ~10 Regional Recycling/Disposal Hubs	2	2028	2030	3	RECs, MS, Private Sector, Blue Fund	Target: By 2030
2.6	Scale up Successful Pilot Interventions	2	2028	2033	6	MS, Local Authorities, Private Sector	Drainage traps, clean-up tech
2.7	Expand Waste Collection Services	2	2028	2033	6	MS, Municipalities, Private/Informal Sector	Target: 50% urban coverage (within phase)
2.8	Develop Urban Integrated Waste Management Plans (IWMPs)	2	2028	2030	3	Municipalities, PAUs	For all major urban areas
2.9	Promote Reuse/Refill Models	2	2028	2033	6	MS Governments, Private Sector, CSOs	
2.10	Support Development/ Deployment of Sustainable Alternatives	2	2028	2033	6	Research Inst., Private Sector, Innov. Fund	
2.11	Implement ALDFG Management Programmes	2	2028	2033	6	MS Fisheries/ Port Auth., Fishing Industry	Gear marking, reception, removal
2.12	Initiate Large-scale Ecosystem Restoration Projects	2	2028	2033	6	MS Environment, CSOs, Restoration Fund	Mangroves, lakes
2.13	Establish/Operationalise Blue Fund & Innovation Fund	2	2028	2030	3	AUC, AUPC, Financial Partners	
2.14	Develop/Launch African Plastic Credit Mechanism	2	2028	2030	3	AUPC, Financial/ Technical Partners	
2.15	Scale up Capacity Building Programmes	2	2028	2033	6	AUPC, RECs, Training Inst., PAUs	Incl. Women/ Youth (Target: 100k women by 2030)
2.16	Support Informal Sector Formalisation	2	2028	2030	3	MS Labour/ Environment, Local Auth., CSOs	Target: 500k formalised by 2030
2.17	Conduct Mid-Term Strategy Review	2	2030	2031	1	AUPC, Independent Evaluators	

ID	Task / Activity	Phase	Start Year (Est.)	End Year (Est.)	Duration (Years)	Key Responsible Actors	Notes / Milestones
3	Phase 3: Full Transition & Optimisation	3	2034	2040	7	(Various)	Goal: Achieve 2040 targets, optimise
3.1	Scale up Interventions/ Infrastructure Continent-wide	3	2034	2040	7	MS, RECs, Private Sector	Full implementation
3.2	Achieve Target Waste Management Coverage (85% Urban)	3	2034	2040	7	MS, Municipalities, Waste Sector	Milestone: 85% by 2040
3.3	Achieve Target Recycling Rate (75% of collected)	3	2034	2040	7	MS, Waste Sector	Milestone: 75% by 2040
3.4	Fully Deploy Advanced Monitoring/Tracking Technologies	3	2034	2038	5	AUPC, PAUs, Technology Providers	E.g., Blockchain
3.5	Implement Primary Microplastic Restrictions	3	2034	2038	5	MS, Industry Regulators	Pellets, tyre wear, textiles
3.6	Achieve 30% Virgin Plastic Reduction Target	3	2034	2040	7	(Result)	Milestone: 30% by 2040
3.7	Achieve 90% Mismanaged Waste Reduction Target	3	2034	2040	7	(Result)	Milestone: 90% by 2040
3.8	Achieve Microplastic Concentration Target (≤0.5 ppm)	3	2034	2040	7	(Result)	Milestone: ≤0.5 ppm by 2040
3.9	Achieve Mangrove Cover Expansion Target (30% increase)	3	2034	2040	7	(Result)	Milestone: 30% increase by 2040
3.1	Maintain GHG Emissions Cap (2019 levels)	3	2034	2040	7	(Result)	Milestone: Cap maintained by 2040
3.11	Consolidate Circular Economy Models	3	2034	2040	7	All stakeholders	Ongoing optimisation
3.12	Ensure Long-Term Sustainability of Financial Mechanisms	3	2034	2040	7	AUPC, Fund Managers, MS	Ongoing
3.13	Strengthen Regional/ Continental Adaptive Management	3	2034	2040	7	AUPC, RECs, MS	Ongoing collaboration
3.14	Conduct Final Strategy Evaluation	3	2040	2040	1	AUPC, Independent Evaluators	End of Strategy Period

Appendix 3. Legislative Templates:

Provide examples or adaptable templates for key national legislation to aid Member States in developing harmonised policies. This could include model laws or framework elements for SUP bans, EPR systems, port reception facility regulations, minimum recycled content standards, fisheries regulations addressing gear loss, relevant SPS measures, labelling standards, etc.

3.1. Outline of the EAC Single Use Plastics Bill

THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY

THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY PROHIBITION OF MANUFACTURING, IMPORTATION, USE AND SALE OF SINGLE USE PLASTICS BILL, 2023

MEMORANDUM

The Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community sets out one of the objectives of the Community as the promotion of sustainable utilisation of the natural resources of the Partner States and the taking of measures that would effectively protect the natural environment of the Partner States. Further, Chapter 19 of the Treaty provides for the co-operation of the Partner States on environment and natural resources management which includes undertaking, through environmental management strategies, to co-operate and co-ordinate their policies and actions for the protection and conservation of natural resources and environment against all forms of degradation and pollution arising from developmental activities.

The Partner States of the East African Community have individually and jointly made great strides towards addressing plastic bags pollution in their respective jurisdictions. A great step was made through the passing of the East African Community Polythene Materials Control Bill at the East Africa Legislative Assembly level which focuses on polythene materials and specifically provides for the elimination of polythene bags in all the Partner States. However, there remains a pressing need for further legislative action with respect to addressing the impact that the manufacture, importation, use and sale of single-use plastics has had in each Partner State and to the East African Community as a whole.

Significant steps are being taken globally to address the pollution caused by single-use plastics through the implementation of legislation on both a national and regional level. The tide continues to swell with discarded single-use plastics in East Africa, partly as a result of shifting consumer habits in the region, partly as a result of the ocean tides bringing pollutants from Asia and partly as a result of the increased use of personal protective equipment in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. There is a pressing need for further affirmative action to be taken by East African policymakers in order to preserve the health of its economy, environment and persons.

The object of this Bill, therefore, is to provide a legal framework for the preservation of a clean and healthy environment, through the prohibition of the manufacturing, importation, use and sale of certain specified single-use plastic products.

SALE OF SINGLE-USE PLASTICS BILL, 2023

THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY PROHIBITION OF MANUFACTURING, IMPORTATION, USE AND SALE OF SINGLE-USE PLASTICS BILL, 2023

ARRANGEMENT OF CLAUSES

Clause

PART 1 – PRELIMINARY PROVISIONS

1. Short Title
2. Commencement
3. Interpretation
4. Scope
5. Objectives

PART 2 – REGULATION OF SINGLE-USE PLASTICS AND EXEMPTIONS

6. Prohibition of manufacture, import, sale or use
7. Exemptions
8. Updates to the list of exempted uses
9. Collection of single-use plastics
10. Enforcement on manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers
11. Waste management
12. Requirements for waste management
13. Prohibition of hazardous waste management practices
14. Prohibition of dumping, littering and open burning of single-use plastics
15. Implementation of additional waste management measures
16. Reporting requirement on waste management practices
17. Restrictions and conditions
18. Transitional provision and disposal of existing stock
19. Exemptions to the prohibition against the sale of single-use plastics
20. Alignment of national laws to the Bill
21. Authorisation

PART 3 – CONSUMPTION REDUCTION

22. Consumption Reduction

PART 4 – AWARENESS RAISING MEASURES AND INCENTIVES

23. Awareness raising measures
24. Incentives
25. Use of regulatory and economic instruments as incentives
26. Timeline for submission of incentives

PART 5 – SANCTIONS AND ENFORCEMENT

27. Enforcement
28. Transboundary enforcement
29. Sanctions
30. Non-issuance of compliance notice
31. Penal Provisions
32. Compliance Notices
33. Contents of a compliance notice
34. Appeals against compliance notices
35. Grounds of appeal against compliance notices
36. Certificate of completion
37. Appeals against decision not to issue a completion certificate
38. Failure to comply with a compliance notice
39. Power of seizure
40. Powers of entry and examination
41. Obstruction

PART 6 – MISCELLANEOUS

42. Precedence
43. Regulations

SALE OF SINGLE-USE PLASTICS BILL, 2023

First Schedule

Second Schedule

Third Schedule

Appendix 4. Stakeholder Matrix:

A detailed mapping of key stakeholders identified during strategy development and deemed essential for successful implementation. This should be categorised by sector (government agencies, RECs, private industry associations, specific companies, NGOs, CSOs, academia/research institutions, informal sector representatives, donor partners) and level of engagement (continental, regional, national, local). Critically, include specific mapping of relevant women's organisations, youth groups, and waste-picker cooperatives to ensure targeted and effective engagement (aiming for 200+ verified partners)

Stakeholder Group	Role in Implementation	Influence	Interest	Engagement Strategy
AU Commission (AUC)	Policy coordination, oversight	High	High	Strategic partner; regular briefings
AMCEN	Political endorsement, alignment	High	High	Policy alignment, ministerial engagement
National Governments	Policy integration, legislation	High	High	Capacity support; legal harmonisation
RECs	Regional alignment	Med-High	High	Co-develop regional action plans
CSOs & NGOs	Advocacy, community delivery	Med	High	Mobilise communities, amplify policy messages
Development Partners (UN, UNEP, UNDP)	Technical support, financing	High	High	Joint programming; knowledge sharing
INGOs (e.g., WWF, Tearfund)	Technical expertise, lobbying	Med-High	High	Leverage global campaigns, policy feedback
Private Sector	Compliance, innovation	High	Med	Eco-design partnerships; EPR pilots
Informal Waste Workers	Collection, recovery, sorting	Low-Med	High	Formal inclusion; health & safety programmes
Research Institutions	Evidence, M&E	Med	High	Data harmonisation; baseline studies
Youth & Community Groups	Behavioural change, advocacy	Low-Med	High	Awareness campaigns; school engagement
Media	Awareness, public engagement	Med	High	Storytelling; platform for citizen voices

Appendix 5. Stakeholder Engagement & Communication Plan

For: Implementation of the Continental Plastics & Microplastics Strategy

1. Strategic Partners (High Influence & High Interest)

Stakeholders: AUC, AMCEN, National Governments, UNEP, UNDP

Engagement Tactics:

- Biannual coordination meetings
- Joint steering committees
- Policy briefs and implementation dashboards

Communication Tools:

- Executive summaries, dashboards, policy memos
- High-level roundtables, AU summits

2. Technical & Support Partners

Stakeholders: INGOs, Development Partners, RECs, Research Institutions

Engagement Tactics:

- Thematic working groups (e.g., circular economy, EPR)
- Knowledge exchange webinars
- Co-authorship of guidance documents

Communication Tools:

- Technical reports, working papers
- Regional newsletters, digital platforms

3. Operational Actors

Stakeholders: Informal Waste Workers, CSOs, NGOs, Youth Groups

Engagement Tactics:

- Participatory planning workshops
- Capacity-building and training sessions
- Local co-implementation forums

Communication Tools:

- Infographics, translated guides
- SMS updates, community radio, WhatsApp

4. Advocacy & Amplification Stakeholders

Stakeholders: Media, INGOs, Youth Groups

Engagement Tactics:

- Storytelling campaigns (plastic-free champions)
- Media training for environmental journalism
- Press kits and field visits

Communication Tools:

- Social media toolkits, press releases
- Radio talk shows, podcasts, opinion editorials

5. Private Sector & Industry

Stakeholders: Producers, Manufacturers, Waste Managers

Engagement Tactics:

- Roundtables on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)
- Innovation challenges and sustainability reporting
- Public–private partnerships

Communication Tools:

- Investor briefs, case studies, KPI dashboards



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