



පරිසර හානි කේන්ද්‍රය  
சுற்றாடல் நீதிக்கான கேந்திர நிலையம்  
Centre for Environmental Justice



www.ejustice.lk

20/A, කුරුපු පාර, කොළඹ 08.  
இல 20/A, குறுப்பு வீதி, கொழும்பு 08.  
20/A, Kuruppu Road, Colombo 08, Sri Lanka.  
Tel/Fax: ++94-11-2683282 email: info@ejustice.lk web: www.ejustice.lk

March 7, 2019

Hon. President Maithripala Sirisena, Presidential Secretariat, Colombo Sri Lanka

Hon. Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe, Prime Minister's Office

Hon. Speaker Karu Jayasuriya, Parliament of Sri Lanka

Hon. Minister Mangala Samaraweera, Minister of Finance

cc. Hon Parliamentary

members Dear Excellencies,

### **Appeal to ban SINGLE USE PLASTICS in Sri Lanka**

As you are aware SINGLE USE PLASTICS has become a major threat to people, environment and all life forms. Sri Lankan soil, coast line, rivers, wetlands, lakes and other ecosystems have already become the dumping ground and polluted due to plastic material and microplastics. It was recently reported that 60,000 Sq Km of the Bay of Bengal has now become a dead zone due to plastics.

The killing of the ocean will have much negative impacts on the fisher communities around the country. We are losing tourism due to the dirty beaches around the country. According to the 2010 data Sri Lanka is among the five countries that badly dealt with plastics. Sri Lanka still remain in the list of countries that release plastics into the ocean.

Scientists have found fish and human body already has microplastics which will have serious health impacts unidentified so far.

We also know that plastics have become a serious impact on the wildlife due to the mismanagement of garbage and the contents of the garbage. Wild elephants, Spotted Deer, Samba Deer, Wild boar, Cattle, dogs and many other wild and domesticated animals are in great danger.

Plastics also become the breeding grounds for mosquitos and increasing the risk of Dengi and other vector borne diseases.

Burning plastics, especially PVC emits very toxic fumes including Dioxins and Furans which are responsible for many lung diseases and Cancer. There is no safe methods of burning plastics in Cement Kilns, Incineration or in waste to Energy plants around the world. The experts who propose such solutions don't know the full picture of the danger.

We understand that the temporary solutions such as using plastic for the road construction, eco bricks etc. continue to increase microplastic in the environment, and do not bring any solution to this problem. It is very clear that there is no 100% effective recycling industry worldwide for plastics.

According to the United Nations Environmental Programme and many other scientists Only nine per cent (9%) of the nine (9) billion tonnes of plastic the world has ever produced has been recycled. Most ends up in landfills, dumps or in the environment. If current consumption patterns and waste management practices continue, then by 2050 there will be around 12 billion tonnes of plastic litter in landfills and the environment.

It is a known fact that Packaging industry is responsible for 90 % of the single use plastics 50% of the total plastics around the world and in Sri Lanka.

Most plastics do not biodegrade. Instead, they slowly break down into smaller fragments known as microplastics. Studies suggest that plastic bags and containers made of expanded polystyrene foam (commonly referred to as “Styrofoam”) can take up to thousands of years to decompose, contaminating soil and water.

The most common single-use plastics found in the environment are, in order of magnitude, cigarette butts, plastic drinking bottles, plastic bottle caps, food wrappers, plastic grocery bags, plastic lids, straws and stirrers, other types of plastic bags, and foam take-away containers. These are the waste products of a throwaway culture that treats plastic as a disposable material rather than a valuable resource to be harnessed.

I have served as a member of the technical committee appointed by your government to bring regulations to mitigate plastics in 2017. However, it has been ineffective and inadequate in many ways. Your initiative as then Minister of Environment to ban plastic bags less than 20 microns in 2007 was not effectively enforced. It is not adequate to resolve this crisis anymore.

Understanding that there is a global crisis related to plastics with no scientific or political solutions exists Centre for Environmental Justice believe that Sri Lanka need to take a more appropriate solution. Since plastic pollution in Sri Lanka do not have a local solution or a single solution, Sri Lanka need to implement very stricter approach based on avoid, minimize, mitigate approach and the polluter pays principle.

**Therefore, we propose immediate ban of single use plastics including plastic bags, lunch sheets, sachet packets, biscuit wrappers, plastic strew, cutlery, yoghurt cups, cotton buds and use of plastic bottle in the water and beverage industry etc.**

Plastic bottles (PET Bottles) an lids use in the water and soft drink/beverage industry such as Coca-Cola, Pepsi-Cola, Elephant house, American water and many other similar companies is a greater challenge to resolve the plastic crisis.

The data shows that year 2012 huge number of plastic stoppers, lids and caps have imported to Sri Lanka. These companies are well known for charging heavy cost for the plastic bottles which is very cheap for production. They have promised to use that money for the recycling of the bottles which never happened in the past 2 decades.

These bottles can be easily transferred to glass bottles which was the case before. Therefore, we believe that use of plastic bottles in the water and beverage industry should be banned immediately.

The small plastic packets of shampoo, toothpaste, washing powders, Samahan, herbal medicines, also known as Sachet packet and small packets of peanuts etc., has identified as one of the greatest challenges to solve the plastic pollution.

We also understood that biscuits wrappers of the Manchee, Maliban and others have become a big part of the plastic pollution. They are even found in the places such as Horton Plains, Sri Pada etc. Therefore, CEJ believe that all Sachet packets and plastic biscuits wrapper should be completely banned immediately.

Plastics toys have also become a serious plastic polluter in Sri Lanka. They are also contaminated with heavy metals such as lead. Such companies and importers should make accountable for cleaning their plastic waste.

Based on the polluter pays principle the packaging industries should develop a mechanism to collect all their plastic material and recycle them in an environmentally sound socially responsible manner.

It's very urgent to revisit the ban imposed in September 2017 and correct the regulatory measures adopted and build a proper implementation mechanism to impose the regulation.

Meanwhile we believe there are sustainable options for the packaging industry based on the natural material, which are not going to develop without providing a reasonable space in the market.

It is now understood that, even bioplastics derived from renewable sources (such as corn starch, cassava roots, or sugarcane) or from bacterial fermentation of sugar or lipids (PHA) do not decay do not automatically degrade in the environment and especially not in the ocean. Therefore, Sri Lanka should not encourage such bioplastics.

Extended Producer Responsibility is such mechanism accepted worldwide. Such process is widely in operation in other countries by the Transnational corporations operate in Sri Lanka and they should have equal treatment for Sri Lankan environment and people too.

It is highly unacceptable that the green washing of these companies under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives and such other programmes. It is highly unacceptable to mislead and misdefine Extended Producer Responsibility for the corporate interest. Consumer Affairs Authority and the Central Environmental Authority should be accountable for directing the Industries and the corporation towards this process.

There should be an ongoing dialogue to advocate the new approaches and introduction of a suitable model of Extended Producer Responsibility as a nationally important action for Sri Lanka. The relevant national agencies, Ministries, corporations, Police, CSOs and people should build a partnership to find a sustainable solution for the plastic pollution in the country.

There should be a nationwide awareness to educate people around the country to change their attitude on plastics. We believe that all media should play a role in educating people and change the attitude on the plastics on pro bono basis.

CEJ believe that Sri Lanka should play a critical role to manage plastics as part of the global effort to manage increasing plastic crisis in the world. It is also important to completely ban importation of plastic waste for Waste to Energy plants, landfilling or reuse.

Sri Lanka government should support the international efforts to bring plastic waste under Basal convention so that it will be treated as a hazardous waste and handle with care.

CEJ believes discouraging overproduction, banning single use plastics, bring legislations to regulate plastic production and usage, look for alternatives to the plastics and get public support through awareness is the way forward to minimize the plastic pollution in Sri Lanka and around the world.

Centre for Environmental Justice expect your leadership to resolve this great threat to Sri Lanka and save our land and marine environment from plastics.

Sincerely yours,



Hemantha Withanage  
Executive Director

cc.

1. Secretary, Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment
2. Secretary Ministry of Finance
3. Director General, Central Environmental Authority
4. Director General, Consumer Affairs Authority