



## **Press Statement:**

December 7, 2021

### **Enforcement of the ban on plastic carrier bags below 30microns**

Several Government agencies in Uganda are assigned different responsibilities by the law to implement and enforce the law on importation, local manufacture, distribution and use of plastic carrier bags (The National Environment Act, 2019); Key among them is National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) and Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS).

NEMA is mandated to monitor, regulate, supervise and coordinate all activities relating to the environment while Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS) is mandated to enforce product standards. The National Environment Act therefore mandates the UNBS to enforce the provisions of section 76 of the Act.

Many factors have continued to delay enforcement of plastics ban in Uganda, but there is renewed commitment to enforce the ban through a joint operations approach by NEMA and UNBS.

So far, NEMA has undertaken inspections and inventory of facilities manufacturing plastic carrier bags since 2020, during which the manufacturers of plastic carrier bags are informed of the requirements in the Act.

Similarly, UNBS has regularly undertaken inspection and certification of manufacturing facilities, a process which involves educating the manufacturers of the requirements of the Uganda Standard; *US 773:2007 Plastic carrier bags and flat bags — Specification* - a compulsory standard that specifies the requirements for plastic carrier bags and flat bags, both domestically produced and imported for use in Uganda.

To date, forty seven (47) factories have been inspected, twenty one (21) of which were found to be non-compliant and suspended from production and required to implement corrective actions before resumption of production. Majority of the factories were concentrated in Kampala, Wakiso, Jinja and Mukono.

Currently, UNBS has over 41 certified manufacturers of Plastic carrier bags and flat bags with 67 valid permits of various products and has seized approximately 133 tonnes of Non-Conforming plastic carrier and flat bags through several enforcement operations inspections.

### **Standards Requirements:**

The Uganda Standard; US 773:2007 Plastic carrier bags and flat bags — Specification covers the thickness and printing requirements of these bags and also sets 30 microns as the minimum requirement for flat and plastic carrier bags. The standard further stipulates the following;

- *Defects*; The bags shall be free from defects such as gels, streaks, pinholes, and particles of foreign matter, indispersed raw materials, cuts and tears that would impair the performance of the bags.
- *Colour and opacity*; the colour and level of opacity of the bags shall be as agreed to between the purchaser and the supplier.
- *Ease of opening*; the bags shall be capable of being opened readily by hand.
- *Odour*; The polyethylene or polypropylene bags used in the manufacture of bags shall not impart any objectionable odour.

Clause 7.2 of the standard further provides for Consignment slips and marking with the following information on every consignment or batch of bags:

- name of the product;
- name and address of manufacturer (including country of origin);
- registered trademark, if any;
- number of bags in a packet;
- film thickness specification of each bag;
- in case of recyclable plastic, the product shall be coded "Recyclable";
- recyclable plastic carrier bags shall bear a code number for identification purposes; and
- all markings on the consignment slips (or bags) shall be either in English, Kiswahili or both.

*Clause 9 provides that no person, company, industry or trader shall manufacture, import, stockpile, trade or distribute for local use plastic carrier bags, which are in contravention of this Uganda Standard.*

The standard has been in place since 2007, while the National Environment Act came into force on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019. Therefore, all manufacturers, importers and distributors of plastic carrier bags are required to comply with National Environment Act and the

Uganda standard. Similarly, the public is required to ensure that such plastic carrier bags are not used or re-used.

Given the mandate of the two institutions, NEMA and UNBS shall collaborate to undertake joint activities aimed at ensuring compliance with the provisions in the National Environment Act and the standard for flat and carrier plastic bags.

The inspections shall target the manufacturers, importers, distributors, among others, and enforcement action, including prosecution in courts of law, shall be taken for entities found to be non-compliant with the provisions of the Act and the Standard.

### **Notes**

The National Environment Act, 2019, under section 76 (1) prohibits the importation, export, local manufacture, use or re-use of categories of plastic carrier bags or plastic products made of polymers of polyethylene or polypropylene below thirty (30) microns.

Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS) is a government organization mandated to develop, promote and enforce standards in protection of public health, safety, and the environment against dangerous and sub-standard products.

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