

# International Environment Day: Plastic in Africa

June 4 2018

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Plastic problem: A landfill in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, gives an idea of the mess in Africa

This year, plastic pollution is the main theme of International Environment Day, celebrated on June 5.

In Africa, 4.4 million tonnes of plastic are found in oceans and seas every year, according to United Nations figures from 2010.

"Plastic, and [waste management](#) in general, is a very big problem in Africa," said Mohamed Atani, regional information officer for the UN environmental agency UNEP.

He described the problem of [plastic pollution](#), which is gaining attention globally as it kills [sea life](#) and blankets swathes of the ocean surface, as "a danger for human health".

"Most of the plastic disposed in the ocean comes from the daily use of single-use plastics," said Atani.

The European Union this month proposed a ban on items such as plastic straws and cutlery.

While many western nations still dole out plastic bags in supermarkets, several African countries have taken the lead and banned them entirely, such as Morocco, Rwanda and Kenya.



An aerial view, taken on June 2, of the Niger river in the Malian capital Bamako, clogged with plastic waste



Spoiled seas: Plastic comprises most of the debris washed up on a beach near the South African city of Cape Town, whose fabled Table Mountain lies in the background



Discarded plastic is a biohazard that can take decades to degrade. But at this site in Kampala, Uganda, women clean plastic bags which are sold to a factory that recycles them into home utensils such as basins, plates and cups.

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