Greetings!

Ban on single-use plastics in protected areas comes into effect

“Kenya is hosting the global environment programme, and has remained a campaigner for a sustainable environment. In light of this commitment, two years ago we banned the use, manufacture and sale of environmentally harmful plastics, polythene bags and packing materials. Building on this, today we are announcing another ban on single use plastics in all our protected areas, including: National Parks, beaches, forests and conservation areas, effective 5th June, 2020” said President Uhuru Kenyatta. He made this announcement while he was addressing the plenary session of the Women Deliver 2019 Conference in Vancouver Canada. This was then followed by the gazettement of the ban by Cabinet Secretary Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife Najib Balala.

Over the years, there has been increased demand for plastic products, while at the same time there have been poor waste management measures that have led to build up of plastic waste in the environment causing negative impacts. Therefore, the ban was necessitated by the adverse impacts that single-use plastics have not just on the environment but also on human health. The good news is that in the recent years there have been global efforts to come up with alternatives to single-use plastics, so as to minimise these impacts. Perhaps the three most important questions that our minds are now confronted with include; which single-use plastics have been listed in the ban? What are these negative impacts? And what are the alternatives to single-use plastics that people can adopt for use in their operations. This week we will provide answers to these questions and highlight measures taken by ecorated facilities, so as to provide sustainability knowledge and at the same time gain inspiration as we comply with the ban.
Negative impacts of single-use plastics

By definition, single-use plastics refer to those plastics that we use only once before they are disposed of or recycled. These are often generated from various areas of operation such as accommodations, schools, restaurants and even our homes, and have impacts on biodiversity and human health.

From a biodiversity perspective, improper disposal of plastics along the shores of water bodies such as rivers, lakes and oceans can have adverse impacts on fish, turtles and other organisms. Usually, these living organisms mistake ocean plastic for plastic food or become entangled in them. The ingested plastics then fill their stomachs, preventing them from feeding anymore and potentially leading to their death.

Further, a throw-away culture where wastes such as plastics are disposed of in municipal dumpsites has been engrained in our day-to-day operations for many years. It is important to pause and reflect on this action, because it has had adverse impacts on ground water and surface water resources which provide us with drinking water. The plastic that is disposed has no ability to degrade but rather photodegrade into small micro-plastics which cause water pollution. In areas where there is inadequate supply of treated water, residents usually depend on the water bodies which may be contaminated leading to health effects such as cancer.

Single-use plastics subject to the ban

According to the single-use plastic implementation plan issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, we will no longer be required to use PET bottles or even wet wipes while we visit protected areas or stay in the accommodations located within them. Other single-use plastics subject to the ban include: disposable cutlery (forks, knives, spoons, chopsticks, straws and beverage stirrers), non-woven plastic carrier bags, cigarettes with plastic filters, plastic cotton bud sticks, expanded polystyrene (EPS) beverage containers, crisps packets, sweet wrappers, confectionary wrappers, sanitary items such as diapers (does not include sanitary pads), lollipop sticks, single use plastic dental flosser, single-use toiletries packaged in plastics such as soaps, lotions or shampoos.

Alternatives to single-use plastics
While we acknowledge that the plastic problem might be here with us for a long time, we can take important steps to reduce the generation of single-use plastic from our operations. Some of the measures include:

**Use of refillable water bottles**

Probably all of us have at one time purchased drinking water or our favourite beverages packaged in plastic bottles, and then threw away the plastic bottle. With the plastic ban, you will be required to use alternatives such as refillable water bottles. These have become readily available in various shapes, colors and sizes at retail outlets, and their biggest advantage is that you can carry them wherever you go for instance, to work, class or even to a national park. The picture below is of refillable aluminium water bottles given to guests for use during their stay at Karen Blixen and Cottars Camps. They can carry them away as souvenirs at the end of their stay.

![Refillable Water Bottles](image)

**Use of paper, bamboo or stainless steel straws**

Paper straws and bamboo straws have in the recent years emerged as sustainable alternatives to plastic straws. This is due to their ability to biodegrade. The use of stainless steel straws is also becoming popular since they can be reused more than once. The illustration below is a picture of paper straw taken during the ecorating reassessment of Amboseli Serena Safari Lodge in July 2019.
Use of refillable liquid soap containers

The use of single-use toiletries packaged in plastics such as soaps, lotions and shampoos have been a common phenomenon in establishments such as hotels. This practice not only leads to wastage of the toiletries but also increases generation of plastic waste. However, in the recent years it has been quite encouraging to see refillable liquid soap containers being used in most ecorated camps and lodges in Kenya as an alternative.

The measures above are just a few examples of alternatives you can adopt for use in your operations. For more information regarding proposed alternatives to the banned single-use plastics, we encourage you to read page thirteen of the single-use plastic implementation plan.

With the single-use plastic ban in protected areas coming into effect tomorrow, it is our hope that through this article you have been enlightened on some of the measures you need to implement so as to comply with the ban, and also reduce our footprint on the environment!