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Submission to the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee

Reference: Human Rights Council Decision 56/117

Topic: Implications of Plastic Pollution for the Full Enjoyment of Human Rights

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I. Introduction

As an agribusiness professional and climate activist in Uganda, I witness daily how plastic pollution transitions from an environmental nuisance to a severe human rights crisis. This submission focuses on the unique impacts of plastics on the **Right to Food, Health, and a Healthy Environment** within the East African context, specifically highlighting the intersection of plastic waste and agricultural productivity.

II. Core Questions: Lifecycle Impacts on Human Rights

Plastic pollution violates human rights across its full life cycle:

- **Extraction & Production**: Fossil fuel extraction for plastic precursors fuels climate change, which disproportionately impacts Ugandan farmers through unpredictable seasons and extreme weather, violating the **Right to Livelihood**.
- **The Use Phase & Information Rights**: In Uganda's "sachet economy," products like cooking oil and detergents are sold in small plastic pouches. These often lack chemical disclosure, violating the consumer's **Right to Information** regarding endocrine disruptors and toxins.
- **End-of-Life (Disposal)**: In the **Hoima and Masindi** districts, plastic ingestion is a leading cause of livestock death. When a goat or cow ingests plastic (ruminal impaction), it results

in the total loss of a household's capital, directly violating the **Right to Food and Economic Security**.

- **Marginalized Communities**: Informal waste pickers at the **Kiteezi landfill** and other municipal sites handle hazardous plastics without PPE or legal recognition, infringing upon their **Right to Safe and Healthy Working Conditions**.

III. Substantive Data & Statistics (Uganda)

- **Daily Generation**: Uganda generates approximately **600 tonnes** of plastic waste daily, primarily in urban centers like Kampala (NEMA, 2022).
- **The Collection Gap**: Only **40% to 50%** of this waste is officially collected. The remaining **50%+** is dumped in drains, leading to flash floods that destroy homes in informal settlements, violating the **Right to Adequate Housing**.
- **Human Health**: Open burning is used by roughly **27%** of households to manage uncollected waste, releasing dioxins that are linked to respiratory illnesses and cancers (Seruwagi et al., 2025).
- **Agribusiness Risks**: Microplastics in the soil disrupt nitrogen and phosphorus cycling, which our research indicates poses a long-term threat to youth-led coffee and commercial crop production.

IV. Impact on LDCs and Landlocked Developing Countries

Uganda faces a **"double burden"**: we lack the fiscal revenue for advanced chemical recycling, yet we are a net recipient of plastic-packaged goods from global corporations.

- **Mitigation**: We advocate for **mandatory extended producer responsibility (EPR)**. Global beverage and consumer goods companies must fund the recovery of their products in Uganda to correct the current human rights failure where the most vulnerable absorb the cost of global waste.

V. Recommendations for a Rights-Based Approach

- **Legal Recognition of Waste Workers**: Formalize the role of informal waste pickers, providing them with social security, healthcare, and protective equipment.

- **Binding Production Caps**: Support the **High Ambition Coalition's** call for global production limits on virgin plastic to reduce the volume of waste entering LDCs.
- **Indigenous and Bio-based Alternatives**: Prioritize **banana fiber, papyrus, and jute packaging**. These are culturally relevant, support local farmers, and are truly biodegradable in Uganda's environmental conditions.
- **Just Transition for Agribusiness**: Integrate plastic-free certification into youth-led commercial agribusiness models to ensure the **Right to a Healthy Environment** is built into our food systems.

Supporting Evidence



Figure 1Plastic pollution on lake victoria





References

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