

## **WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY 2025: SAFEGUARDING GHANA'S ENVIRONMENT, OUR COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY**

Ghana has long demonstrated its commitment to environmental governance through the ratification of global environmental agreements and the implementation of national laws and public policies. The foundation of this commitment is firmly rooted in the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, which enjoins every citizen to uphold environmental integrity. Specifically, **Article 41(g & k)** calls on citizens “**to contribute to the well-being of the community in which they live; and to protect and safeguard the environment.**”

As the world commemorates World Environment Day 2025 on Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> June 2025, under the global theme “*Combating Plastic Pollution*”, the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) is joining stakeholders to raise awareness about the pressing need to reform our environmental habits, especially among the youth.

### **Aligning with Global Sustainability Goals**

Ghana's national policies align strongly with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and Goal 14 (Life below Water). Ghana's role on the international stage has been significant. The President of Ghana previously served as Co-Chair of the UN Eminent Group of SDG Advocates, reaffirming the country's resolve to achieve a sustainable future. However, this commitment must be reflected more profoundly at the local level. Despite its global stature, Ghana faces critical challenges in environmental sanitation and waste management.

### **A Growing Crisis: Ghana's Plastic Pollution Problem**

According to the Blacksmith Institute (2013) and Waste Atlas (2014), Ghana is among the top 10 most polluted countries and among the top 50 with the largest dumpsites in the world. The country generates approximately 13,500 tons of solid waste daily, with plastic waste forming 8–9% of the municipal waste stream.

What's more alarming is that plastic waste in Ghana is poorly managed:

- Only 45% of Accra's daily waste is collected.
- An estimated 501,875 tons of plastic waste are produced annually.
- Less than 2% of this waste is recycled.
- Over 250,000 tons of plastic waste end up in the Atlantic Ocean every year.

These statistics are not just numbers - they reflect choked gutters, flooded cities, contaminated food and water, loss of human life, and a damaged ecosystem.

## **The Lifespan of Plastic: A Hidden Menace.**

Plastic, by its very nature, is built to last. It takes hundreds of years to decompose:

- Plastic bottles: 450 years
- Diapers: 450 years
- Fishing lines: 600 years
- Foamed cups: 50 years

Unlike organic materials, plastic cannot be broken down by natural microorganisms. Every piece of plastic ever produced still exists in some form today. The implications for Ghana's health, environment, and economy are severe and long-term.

## **Children as Change Agents: NCCE's Youth Focus for 2025**

In marking World Environment Day 2025, the NCCE is intensifying its public education campaigns in schools and communities to cultivate eco-conscious behaviours. Our focus is on the youth, who are the next generation of environmental stewards.

Pupils are being taught the principles of the **3Rs**:

1. **Reduce** – Use fewer plastic items.
2. **Reuse** – Repurpose plastic products creatively.
3. **Recycle** – Separate waste and dispose of plastics correctly.

They are also encouraged to:

- **Replace plastic bags** with cloth or cane baskets.
- **Use lunch boxes** and refillable bottles.
- **Take their waste home** when public bins are unavailable.
- **Convert waste into creative art** (e.g., pencil holders, piggy banks).

These interventions aim to ensure that eco-consciousness becomes a lifestyle embedded from childhood and carried into adulthood.

## **A Path Forward: Civic Duty and Policy Enforcement**

The Constitution of Ghana makes environmental stewardship a civic duty, not just a governmental task. Every Ghanaian has a role to play, from choosing reusable bags at markets to participating in local clean-up activities.

Furthermore, proper environmental sanitation:

- Prevents flooding during the rainy season.
- Protects public health from diseases and contaminated food.
- Reduces the cost of public sanitation services.

- Creates green jobs and stimulates the circular economy.
- Supports national development and well-being.

With 82% of Ghana's plastic waste recoverable using existing technology, it's time to treat plastic not as waste, but as a resource. Investing in recycling industries can generate up to GHC 2 billion annually and create millions of jobs.

### **Conclusion: It Begins with Me, It Begins with You**

As Ghana strives to attain a cleaner, greener future, attitudinal change remains our most powerful tool. Every plastic item avoided, reused, or recycled is a step toward a cleaner Ghana. The NCCE calls on students, parents, market women, businesses, traditional authorities, and policymakers to join this collective movement. Let's make "Beat Plastic Pollution" not just a slogan, but a daily practice.

Together, we can safeguard the environment for future generations and uphold our constitutional mandate to protect and preserve Ghana, our beloved nation.

May God bless our Homeland, Ghana and make her great and strong!

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