***PLASTIC POLLUTION IS A MENACE TO ENVIRONMENT***

Plastic pollution has become a serious environmental problem worldwide, and Kenya is no exception.

Kenya is one of the countries in Africa that has been worst hit by plastic pollution. The country has struggled with plastic waste, facing a severe waste crisis for decades, and the situation has worsened in recent years.

Plastic pollution is flooding our planet, harming people’s health, destroying biodiversity and fuelling the climate crisis.

Plastic waste has infiltrated various ecosystems, including oceans, rivers, and wildlife habitats. The situation is dire, and concerted efforts are needed to tackle this menace.

A significant portion of the plastic waste in Kenya is from single-use plastic products such as straws, plastic bags, and bottles. These products are widely used in the country, and their disposal is a significant problem. Most of the plastic waste is not recycled, and it ends up in landfills or pollutes the environment.

Study estimates have shown that the amount of plastic that becomes waste across the country is 0.5 to 1.3 million tons per year, of which only eight percent is recycled. The rest is landfilled, incinerated, or released back into the environment.

The plastic waste problem has severe consequences for the environment and human health. The waste clogs rivers and waterways, leading to flooding and the destruction of habitats for aquatic life. It also affects the quality of air, water, and soil, leading to health problems for humans and wildlife. Plastic waste is also a significant contributor to climate change, as it releases harmful greenhouse gases when incinerated.

In response to the plastic pollution crisis, organized groups and individuals have taken up the mantle to reduce plastic waste. These groups include civil society organizations and private-sector players.

As an individual, I have been committed to creating a cleaner and healthier environment in my community by initiating a campaign to clean up different spaces in the public and other areas where littering is prevalent. Through collective efforts with like-minded individuals, we have been able to work cohesively and embrace holistic approach in removing a lot of plastic waste from these areas, thereby improving the quality of the environment.

Additionally, I have embarked on a mission and journey of recycling plastic waste materials into eco-friendly products like aesthetic flowers, laundry baskets, flower vases, shopping bags, trees, pen holders and etcetera.

Recycling of plastic waste is helpful in reducing the amount of plastic waste that ends up in landfills or pollutes the environment. The efforts have yielded positive results, and I have also received positive feedback from members of the communities.

Various multi-stakeholder platforms, such as the Kenya Plastic Action Plan, have been established with the aim of promoting sustainable waste management practices and reducing plastic pollution in the country. The private sector-led Policy and Action Plan seek to facilitate the transition to a circular economy that promotes environmentally sustainable use and recycling of plastics in Kenya. These platforms bring together stakeholders from the government, civil society, and the private sector to collaborate towards a shared goal of reducing plastic pollution.

Individuals also play a significant role in reducing plastic pollution in Kenya. Through various initiatives, individuals are educating their communities about the dangers of plastic waste and promoting sustainable waste management practices. One such initiative is the 'Mazingira Challenge,' a campaign that encourages individuals to clean up their neighborhoods and dispose of waste responsibly. The initiative has gained widespread support, with thousands of Kenyans taking part in cleaning up their surroundings.

Another initiative that has gained popularity in Kenya is the use of reusable bags. In 2017, Kenya implemented one of the world's most comprehensive bans on plastic bags. The ban on plastic bags has seen the increased use of reusable bags, reducing the amount of plastic waste in the country significantly.

Some of the sustainable impacts of recycling plastic waste materials include:

1. It protects ecosystem and wildlife habitats
2. It conserves our natural resources
3. It reduces carbon emission and incineration
4. It saves money
5. It saves energy
6. It brings people together
7. It creates jobs
8. It reduces the need to harvest new and raw materials from the earth
9. It creates a more sustainable circular economy
10. It educates people about the importance of protecting our environment.
11. It prevents adding more rubbish to landfills

Plastic pollution is a severe problem in Kenya, and concerted efforts are needed to address the issue. Organized groups and individuals have a critical role to play in reducing plastic waste in the country.

Through sustainable waste management practices, education, and the use of reusable bags, we can reduce the amount of plastic waste that ends up in the environment. In the face of environmental challenges, let’s unite and be the solution, not the pollution. Our collective efforts today can shape a sustainable and vibrant tomorrow. Embrace the responsibility, nurture our sphere, and together, we can answer the call to save our planet.

In conclusion, it's time for everyone to take responsibility for the plastic waste problem and work towards a cleaner and healthier environment for all. Everyone should embrace proper waste management practices to combat the menace of plastic pollution.

Effort to promote better waste management needs to be done in an effective manner by embracing the three Rs” ***REUSE, REDUCE, and RECYCLE***

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