



# **Selection, Design and Implementation of Economic Instruments in the Solid Waste Management Sector in Kenya**

*The Case of Plastic Bags*



# Foreword

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This thoughtful and comprehensive report on the problems and possible solutions to Kenya's and particularly Nairobi's waste problems was recently launched to keen public and media interest during UNEP's 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Governing Council held in Nairobi in February 2005. The study looks at the rising mountain of solid waste generated in Kenya's capital and, using UNEP guidelines, investigates the use of economic instruments for solid waste management. Economic instruments are increasingly being recognized as a viable solution to many environmental problems. They can provide the incentive to change behaviour and generate income to support more environmentally friendly ways of dealing with pollution.

After a broad overview of the problem of solid waste management in general, the report focuses on a specific problem of critical concern to the population of Nairobi – the scourge of plastic shopping bags that litter the city – and develops an integrated environmental policy package to address the problem. The findings and conclusions of the report point to the need to adopt a range of strategies when designing environmental policy that include a harmonious balance of economic instruments, command and control measures and voluntary initiatives. Accordingly, a seven point strategy is recommended, to be introduced over a two to three year period and implemented by a new body to be known as the Plastics Levy Management Committee (PLMC).

The policy proposals start with a total ban on flimsy plastic bags less than 30 microns thick and the application of a levy or tax on the thicker ones. The levy would then be earmarked to support a range of other measures such as public awareness campaigns, recycling schemes and the development of environmentally friendly alternative bags such as cotton or sisal. A pilot implementation plan has been outlined in the report and I understand from the Kenyan Government that there is real political will to now take these proposals forward. Addressing the problem of plastic bags in Nairobi can be the start, the test bed to what I hope will be wide ranging and creative action to cut pollution and stimulate new, modern businesses and jobs in Nairobi and elsewhere.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Klaus Töpfer'. The signature is stylized and includes a horizontal line above the name.

Klaus Töpfer  
Executive Director  
United Nations Environment Programme  
March 2005



# Acknowledgements

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The inspiration and energy for the project came from the then Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources in the Republic of Kenya, Ambassador Francis Muthaura (currently Head of the Public Service and Secretary to the Cabinet), and Hussein Abaza from the Economics and Trade Branch (ETB) of UNEP.

Naftali Ndugire at the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) was the project leader. Team members included Bernard K'Omudho, Francis Kihumba, Joyce C. Onyango, Michael Okoth and Julia Magambo. The National Steering Committee established to guide the project included representatives from the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism; Ministry of Finance and Planning; Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources; Nairobi City Council; National Chamber of Commerce and Industry; University of Nairobi; The World Conservation Union (IUCN); and other co-opted stakeholders. Moses Ikiara and Clive Mutunga from the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) reworked the final report and developed the case study on the selection and design of economic instruments for plastics waste management. We would also like to acknowledge the industry participants who participated in the stakeholder workshops and provided information through interviews and other forums.

At UNEP, the project was initiated and supervised by Hussein Abaza. Anja von Moltke coordinated and provided technical support to the project. The UNEP Working Group on Economic Instruments provided substantial guidance throughout the project. Special thanks here go to Veena Jha, Theodore Panayotou and Konrad von Moltke. Desta Mebratu from the Regional Office for Africa also provided invaluable comments. Andrea Smith edited the final report, with the assistance of Kenneth Chulley. Desiree Leon processed the report for publication and administrative support was provided by Rahila Mughal.



# United Nations Environment Programme

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The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the overall coordinating environmental organization of the United Nations system. Its mission is to provide leadership and encourage partnerships in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing and enabling nations and people to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations. In accordance with its mandate, UNEP works to observe, monitor and assess the state of the global environment, improve the scientific understanding of how environmental change occurs, and in turn, how such change can be managed by action-oriented national policies and international agreements. UNEP's capacity building work thus centers on helping countries strengthen environmental management in diverse areas that include freshwater and land resource management, the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, marine and coastal ecosystem management, and cleaner industrial production and eco-efficiency, among many others.

UNEP, which is headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, marked its first 30 years of service in 2002. During this time, in partnership with a global array of collaborating organizations, UNEP has achieved major advances in the development of international environmental policy and law, environmental monitoring and assessment, and the understanding of the science of global change. This work also supports the successful development and implementation of the world's major environmental conventions. In parallel, UNEP administers several multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) including the Vienna Convention's Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (SBC), the Convention on Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade (Rotterdam Convention, PIC) and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity as well as the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs).

## **Division of Technology, Industry and Economics**

The mission of the Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE) is to encourage decision makers in government, local authorities and industry to develop and adopt policies, strategies and practices that are cleaner and safer, make efficient use of natural resources, ensure environmentally sound management of chemicals, and reduce pollution and risks for humans and the environment. In addition, it seeks to enable implementation of conventions and international agreements and encourage the internalization of environmental costs. UNEP DTIE's strategy in carrying out these objectives is to influence decision-making through partnerships with other international organizations, governmental authorities, business and industry, and non-governmental organizations; facilitate knowledge management through networks; support implementation of conventions; and work closely with UNEP regional offices. The Division, with its Director and Division Office in Paris, consists of one centre and five branches located in Paris, Geneva and Osaka.

## Economics and Trade Branch

The Economics and Trade Branch (ETB) is one of the five branches of DTIE. Its mission is to enhance the capacities of countries, especially of developing countries and countries with economies in transition, to integrate environmental considerations into development planning and macroeconomic policies, including trade policies. ETB helps countries to develop and use integrated assessment and incentive tools for sustainable development and poverty reduction. The Branch further works to improve the understanding of environmental, social and economic impacts of trade liberalization and the trade impacts of environmental policies, and to strengthen coherence between Multilateral Environmental Agreements and the World Trade Organization. Through its finance initiative, ETB helps enhance the role of the financial sector in moving towards sustainability.

In the field of environmental economics, ETB aims to promote the internalization of environmental costs and enhance the use of economic instruments to contribute to sustainable development and poverty reduction, including in the specific context of Multilateral Environmental Agreements. The UNEP Working Group on Economic Instruments, serves as an advisory body to UNEP-ETB's work programme on economics and has been instrumental in the preparation of UNEP publications on economic instruments.

For more information regarding UNEP's work on economic instruments, please contact *Anja von Moltke, Economics Affairs Officer, Economics and Trade Branch* at +41 22 917 81 37 or e-mail [anja.moltke@unep.ch](mailto:anja.moltke@unep.ch).

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