

## ANNEX C: 2008 Status of Plastic bags

Country	Strategy	Description
Australia	Voluntary.	<p>The retailers' Code of Practice for the Management of Plastic Carry Bags was accepted by Ministers in October 2003. Commitments included a 25% reduction in plastic bag use by the end of 2004 and a 50% reduction in plastic bag use by 2005. The Code includes a commitment by retailers to report twice a year. Reports show that plastic bag use decreased by 29% by June 2004. Furthermore, Coles Bay in Tasmania successfully banned plastic check-out bags in all their retail stores. In the first twelve months, Coles Bay stopped the use of 350,000 plastic check-out bags.</p> <p>Major retailers have sold over 10 million reusable bags as an alternative to "giveaway" plastic bags. Most efforts by retailers have been voluntary, and major retailers cut their plastic usage by 45% between 2003 and 2005.</p> <p>In 2006, the state of Victoria began charging consumers for each plastic bag they use. Smaller businesses are exempt, but the government hopes that the initiative will reduce the 1.1 billion bags per year consumed in Victoria alone.<sup>1</sup></p>
Bangladesh	Outright ban.	<p>Strategy: March 2002 polythene bags banned as they were blocking drainage systems &amp; had been a major culprit during 1988 &amp; 1998 floods that submerged two-thirds of the country<sup>2</sup>. These problems are caused by a lack of infrastructure to dispose of plastic bags properly. Bangladesh was using 9 million bags a day and littered 85% of those. In March of 2002, a ban was established on the manufacture or use of plastic bags. Anyone caught with a plastic bag is faced with a \$2,000 fine.</p> <p>Effect: This has brought plastic bag usage and litter to a complete halt. It has revived the jute bag industry and other sustainable and biodegradable alternatives. Jute grows abundantly in Bangladesh and requires a lot less energy for processing than polythene. In 2006 Australia's organization "Keep Australia Beautiful" awarded a "Plastic Bag Reduction Award" to a business that provides sustainable-trade, Bangladesh-made jute bags to mainstream Australian retailers.<sup>3</sup></p>
Belgium	Tax payable by retailers who pass on cost to consumers.	<p>Strategy: The Belgian government tried to introduce a carbon-based tax on all packaging materials but backed down due to strong opposition from a coalition of environmentalists, industry and consumers. Instead of a tax on all packaging materials, the government has decided to tax selected types of packaging including Plastic bags (carrier bags) EUR 3 per kg. In June 2007, the Belgium government started phasing in a tax on single-use plastic bags to change retailers' habits. It is a new ecotax for retailers, the cost of which will be passed onto consumers.<sup>4</sup></p>
Canada	Target commitment to reduced use.	<p>In 2007 the Ontario state government committed to reduce plastic bag consumption by 50% in the next five years. The initiative also includes monitoring and reporting to ensure progress is indeed made. Ontarians use almost 80 plastic bags per second - close to seven million bags every day. Reducing the volume of plastic bags that end up in landfills is a top priority for us is a priority for the government. The Canadian Plastics Industry is launching defensive strategies, including websites such as myplasticbags.com, arguing that plastic bags are useful, convenient, and inexpensive. They urge customers to use them but to use them wisely by reusing and recycling.<sup>5</sup></p>
China	Ban of free plastic bags. Customer	<p>Strategy: Ban on free plastic bags at shops &amp; supermarkets. Customers to be charged for any used. Will come into effect on June 1 2008. Bags will also be banned from all public transportation including buses, trains, planes &amp; from airports and scenic locations. Shops have been instructed to mark the price of the plastic bags clearly and not fold them into the cost of other items.</p>

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	s clearly charged.	
Denmark	Tax payable by retailers & absorbed into cost passed on to consumers.	<p>Strategy: Government introduced a tax on plastic carrier bags in 1994.<sup>6</sup> The tax (22 DKK per kilo of plastic bags) is payable by retailers and is therefore not obvious to customers<sup>7</sup>.</p> <p>Effect: Reduced consumption of plastic bags by 66%<sup>8</sup></p> <p>Administration: The Danish market has collected around 170 million DKK so far and has used that money to fund many environmental projects. Also employ a general waste tax that has proven to be very successful. The waste tax is differentiated so that it is most expensive to landfill waste, cheaper to incinerate it and tax exempt to recycle it.<sup>9</sup></p>
Hong Kong	In 2003 ban on larger retailers providing free bags. From 2009 levy on customers.	<p>2003 ban on larger retailers providing free bags. <sup>10</sup></p> <p>Shoppers will pay a levy of 50 Hong Kong cent (approximately 3p) on every plastic bag taken home from supermarkets, convenience shops and cosmetics shops by 2009 following approval of the new Product Eco-responsibility Bill. It will be phased in with the first phase affecting supermarkets and larger chain stores expected to be in place by the beginning of 2009.<sup>11</sup></p>
India	In 2003 ban on thin bags in some states In 2005 total ban in some states.	<p>In 2003 a law prohibited plastic bags thinner than 20 microns in the cities of Bombay and Delhi, along with the entire states of Maharashtra and Kerala. The restriction is meant to discourage production and use due to the thicker bags being more expensive. Marginal success.<sup>12</sup></p> <p>In 2005 in the northern Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, a new law states that anyone found even using a polythene bag could face prison or a stiff fine. The new law bans the production, storage, use, sale and distribution of polythene bags. The law is based on legislation passed by the national parliament, but Himachal Pradesh is the first state to have implemented it. In addition, the government of the western Indian state of Maharashtra banned the manufacture, sale and use of all plastic bags, saying they choked drainage systems during recent monsoon rains. Manufacturers and stores selling plastic bags will be fined 5,000 rupees while individuals using bags face penalties of 100,000 rupees (approximately \$2,000).<sup>13</sup></p> <p>In 2007 other parts of India are focusing on public information campaigns. According to The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in Panaji, Goa, a community has launched a system in which individuals donate old newspapers and magazines, which are cut into paper-bags and sold to shops to reduce plastic bag usage.<sup>14</sup></p> <p>Several other states in India have banned, or are in the process of banning, plastic bags. Momentum has grown following flooding in Bombay in July 2005, which killed more than 1,000 people, and caused damage totalling more than £1.5 billion. The city's authorities lay part of the blame on plastic bags, masses of which had clogged gutters and drains, preventing the monsoon waters from draining away. Although plastic bags had been banned in Bombay after previous floods, an illicit trade in them had developed<sup>15</sup>. In the early 1990s, the Ladakh Women's Alliance and other citizens groups led a successful campaign to ban plastic bags in the district, where the first of May is now celebrated as "Plastic Ban Day"<sup>16</sup>.</p>

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		<p>India also placed a ban on plastic bag use and manufacturing. India was also suffering from deadly floods caused by plastic bag clogged storm drains. India thought about implementing a tax on bags but deemed it too difficult to collect it. India opted for the easier option to enforce a ban on plastic bags. If a retailer is found using plastic bags it faces large fines and even a one month ban on trading.</p>
Ireland	Levy on consumers.	<p>Strategy: In 2001 the Waste Management Regulations were enacted. The Republic of Ireland was consuming 1.2 billion plastic shopping bags per year before introducing the 'PlasTax' in March 2002. This applied to all bags except those used to house raw meat or fresh produce. Administration: Govt required record of bags received &amp; record of bags given out, for what purpose and how much tax collected.</p> <p>Effect: Since the tax of about 15 Euro cent per bag sold (approximately 10p) consumption has plummeted by 90% to 235million in the first year. The tax raised \$9.6 million raised in the first year is put into a "green fund" to further benefit the environment through projects.<sup>17</sup></p> <p>Increase in sale of reuseable. There was some concern over setbacks from increased consumption of large plastic garbage bags. Some stores reported an increase in usage of up to 77% however there has been a large amount of plastic saved by nearly banning the use of plastic bags. It has dramatically reduced litter around the country and saved approximately 18,000,000 litres of oil.<sup>18</sup></p> <p>In 2005 figures estimated a 95% reduction in consumption. This levy has been viewed as a major success by the government and environmental groups. There is a large consumer acceptance of the tax possibly due to an intensive environmental awareness campaign launched in conjunction with the levy. The amount of plastic being sent to Irish landfills has been reduced dramatically. The result: a clear, visual improvement in cities, on coastlines and in the countryside.<sup>19</sup></p>
Italy	Ban on non-biodegradable bags from 2010.	<p>Italy has passed a law providing for non-biodegradable plastic bags to be banned from 2010. The 2007 Finance Act also includes provision for a tax on plastic carrier bags.</p>
Kenya	Ban on thin bags. Levy on thick bags.	<p>Kenya are prohibiting thinner plastic bags and imposing levies on thicker ones. According to the BBC, Kenya's partial ban went into effect on June 14, 2007, and Uganda followed on July 1.<sup>20</sup></p>
New Zealand	Voluntary.	<p>In 2003 it was estimated that New Zealanders use more than 2.2 million plastic bags each week. Several of New Zealand's leading retailers took the initiative to reduce plastic bag use by introducing reusable shopping bags for sale. Foodstuffs New Zealand, owner of Pak'N Save and New World, stocked shelves with 20,000 cotton reusable bags while competitor Progressive Enterprises quickly followed. The Warehouse also started its own line in reusable bags. Initial results have were positive<sup>21</sup>.</p> <p>In 2005 Government sponsored programs promoting environmental awareness, urging consumers to Reduce Your Rubbish and consider eco-friendly alternatives to plastic bags were enabled. Grassroots efforts are also popped up around the country to help in the fight to eliminate plastic bags<sup>22</sup>.</p> <p>In 2007 a study for the New Zealand Retailers Association found 8 out of 10 New Zealanders used free plastic shopping bags per week. Starting in July, retailers New World, Foodtown, Woolworths, Pak'n Save, and Countdown will have their employees ask customers at checkout to think twice</p>

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		before using the plastic bags. <sup>23</sup>
Eritrea	Ban	Banned plastic bags in 2005.
Somalia	Ban	Banned plastic bags in 2005.
Rwanda	Ban	Banned plastic bags in 2005.
Uganda	Ban & levy.	In mid-2007 banned thinner plastic bags & imposed levies on thicker ones.
Tanzania (including Zanzibar)	Ban	Tanzania has been the most aggressive African country in the fight against the plastic bag blight. In 2006 the Vice-President declared a total ban on plastic bags. <sup>24</sup>
Scotland	Voluntary. "Green Till" program to reward those not using plastic carrier bags.	Scotland considered a bill that would put a 15-pence tax on each disposable plastic bag handed out to shoppers. It was withdrawn in late 2006. In addition, many regions are joining the fight against plastic bags. Reusable cotton shopping bags are to be distributed free to shoppers on a trial basis to encourage people to reduce the number of plastic bags they use, under the "Fantastic it's not plastic!" initiative. An Edinburgh supermarket is piloting a program of "green tills," allowing shoppers who are not using plastic carrier bags to get through the checkouts faster. <sup>25</sup>
South Africa	Ban and levy	<p>Customers in South Africa now have a choice of buying the new government-regulated bags, shopping with no bags, or taking their own bags, following new legislation which has been broadly welcomed<sup>26</sup>. The price of a bag ranges from 25 to 46 cents depending on its size<sup>27</sup>. Some of the money from the sale of the bags is being used to fund a not-for-profit venture to recycle plastic bags. Supermarkets noted that they would be able to offer goods at lower prices as a result of the legislation<sup>28</sup>. Sales of reusable bags have rapidly increased. An initial order of 300,000 cloth bags from a major retailer was sold out within two days, prompting an order for a further 2 million bags<sup>29</sup>.</p> <p>In 2003 ban on thinner plastic bags as well as imposing levies on thicker ones. In response to the government threat of a ban on single-use plastic bags, the plastics industry lobbied for a bag tax instead. Negotiations led to a bag tax set for introduction in May 2003, to be paid by manufacturers and passed on to consumers. Similar to the Irish PlasTax, the charge per bag will appear on shoppers' sales receipts as a reminder that they can save money if they use reusable bags. South Africa is also improving recovery and recycling systems.<sup>30</sup></p> <p>The initiative has curbed the number of bags floating around the country however there are concerns that funds from the tax have not been directed into recycling programs or other green initiatives. Others worry that retailers are even profiting from the levies because they upcharge customers for the bags.<sup>31</sup></p>
Switzerland	Levy on customers	Since 2003, Switzerland requires supermarkets to charge US\$0.15 to US\$0.20 (around 10p) per bag. The majority of shoppers bring their own reusable shopping bags <sup>32</sup> .
Taiwan	Ban in	Taiwan was using 16 million shopping bags prior to the ban in 2001. The ban was implemented in stages. The first stage was banning the use of plastic

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<p>2001. Ban lifted in 2006.</p>	<p>bags in schools, the military, and other government agencies. The second stage was banning plastic bag use in supermarkets, large retailers and fast food. The third and final stage was banning plastic bag use by street peddlers. Anyone caught giving out plastic bags faced a fine of up to NT\$300,000.</p> <p>In 2006 Taiwan's EPA lifted the ban and now free plastic bags can be offered by food service operators. The EPA was concerned that plastic bags reused for food could create health problems. Even though it was short-lived, its effect lingers simply because consumers became more aware of the plastic bag menace. In a survey conducted by the administration, 77% of respondents claimed to have cut back on the use of plastic bags since the ban, and 45% of respondents had continued not to consume plastic bags after the ban was lifted. This is in an improvement as only 18 percent reported carrying their own plastic bags before the policy was officially implemented five years ago.<sup>33</sup></p>
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<sup>1</sup> Reuseablebags.com, 2008. Trend From Around The World <http://www.reuseablebags.com/facts.php?id=9> (accessed 14/04/2008)

<sup>2</sup> BBC, 2002. Planet Earth's New Nemesis? <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/1974750.stm>, accessed 16 February 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Reuseablebags.com, 2008. Trend From Around The World <http://www.reuseablebags.com/facts.php?id=9> (accessed 14/04/2008)

<sup>4</sup> Reuseablebags.com, 2008. Trend From Around The World <http://www.reuseablebags.com/facts.php?id=9> (accessed 14/04/2008)

<sup>5</sup> Reuseablebags.com, 2008. Trend From Around The World <http://www.reuseablebags.com/facts.php?id=9> (accessed 14/04/2008)

<sup>6</sup> Nolan-ITU, 2002. Plastic Shopping Bags – Analysis of Levies and Environmental Impacts Final Report.

Canberra: Department of the Environment and Heritage.

<sup>7</sup> Smith S, 2004. Plastic Bags. Briefing Paper No. 5/2004, Parliament of New South Wales.

<sup>8</sup> Nolan-ITU, 2002. Plastic Shopping Bags – Analysis of Levies and Environmental Impacts Final Report.

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<sup>9</sup> Reuseablebags.com, 2008. Trend From Around The World <http://www.reuseablebags.com/facts.php?id=9> (accessed 14/04/2008)

<sup>10</sup> Reuseablebags.com, 2008. Trend From Around The World <http://www.reuseablebags.com/facts.php?id=9> (accessed 14/04/2008)

<sup>11</sup> The Earth Times, 2007. Shoppers to pay levy on plastic bags in Hong Kong <http://www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/162456.html> (accessed 14/04/2008)

<sup>12</sup> Reuseablebags.com, 2008. Trend From Around The World <http://www.reuseablebags.com/facts.php?id=9> (accessed 14/04/2008)

<sup>13</sup> Reuseablebags.com, 2008. Trend From Around The World <http://www.reuseablebags.com/facts.php?id=9> (accessed 14/04/2008)

<sup>14</sup> Reuseablebags.com, 2008. Trend From Around The World <http://www.reuseablebags.com/facts.php?id=9> (accessed 14/04/2008)

<sup>15</sup> The Times, 2005. Plastic Bags Brought Bombay to its Knees. London: The Times, 22 October 2005.

<sup>16</sup> Halweil, 2004. Plastic Bags in Good Stuff. Washington, DC: Worldwatch Institute.

<sup>17</sup> Reuseablebags.com, 2008. Trend From Around The World <http://www.reuseablebags.com/facts.php?id=9> (accessed 14/04/2008)

<sup>18</sup> Reuseablebags.com, 2008. Trend From Around The World <http://www.reuseablebags.com/facts.php?id=9> (accessed 14/04/2008)

<sup>19</sup> Reuseablebags.com, 2008. Trend From Around The World <http://www.reuseablebags.com/facts.php?id=9> (accessed 14/04/2008)

<sup>20</sup> Reuseablebags.com, 2008. Trend From Around The World <http://www.reuseablebags.com/facts.php?id=9> (accessed 14/04/2008)

<sup>21</sup> Reuseablebags.com, 2008. Trend From Around The World <http://www.reuseablebags.com/facts.php?id=9> (accessed 14/04/2008)

<sup>22</sup> Reuseablebags.com, 2008. Trend From Around The World <http://www.reuseablebags.com/facts.php?id=9> (accessed 14/04/2008)

<sup>23</sup> Reuseablebags.com, 2008. Trend From Around The World <http://www.reuseablebags.com/facts.php?id=9> (accessed 14/04/2008)

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<sup>26</sup> Resol, 2003. South Africa Plastic Bag Tax Arrives to Mixed Reception. [http://www.resol.com.br/curiosidades2\\_ing.asp?id=1249](http://www.resol.com.br/curiosidades2_ing.asp?id=1249), accessed 16 February 2006.

<sup>27</sup> SABC, 2003. South Africans Not Happy to Pay for Plastic Bags. [http://www.sabcnews.com/south\\_africa/general/0,2172,58058,00.html](http://www.sabcnews.com/south_africa/general/0,2172,58058,00.html), accessed 15 February 2006.

<sup>28</sup> SABC, 2003. South Africans Not Happy to Pay for Plastic Bags. [http://www.sabcnews.com/south\\_africa/general/0,2172,58058,00.html](http://www.sabcnews.com/south_africa/general/0,2172,58058,00.html), accessed 15 February 2006.

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<sup>31</sup> Reuseablebags.com, 2008. Trend From Around The World <http://www.reuseablebags.com/facts.php?id=9> (accessed 14/04/2008)

<sup>32</sup> Reuseablebags.com, 2008. Trend From Around The World <http://www.reuseablebags.com/facts.php?id=9> (accessed 14/04/2008)

<sup>33</sup> Reuseablebags.com, 2008. Trend From Around The World <http://www.reuseablebags.com/facts.php?id=9> (accessed 14/04/2008)