



“Environmental consciousness is good business”

Memory Melody Kudzayi Mafo (Partner) Scanlen & Holderness & Fidelis Manyuchi [Senior Associate] Scanlen & Holderness

In today's world, the Environment is undeniably a global risk, which warrants critical attention in any business operation. An environmentally conscious business is one that makes decisions that are informed and reflect the awareness of the impact it has on the environment. It involves making decisions and taking actions that are in the interests of protecting the environment.¹

From a legal perspective, the environmental right is a fundamental Human Right enshrined in the new constitution of Zimbabwe.² The Environmental right includes every person's right “to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being and to have an environment protected for the benefit of present and future generations. The new constitution ushered in a new concept where we see the law's ability to protect the environment

Businesses are considered persons in the eyes of the law.³ They have the same legal rights and responsibilities enjoyed by natural persons. The burden to protect the environmental right is placed on each and every citizen including a corporate citizen, who are considered to be the biggest contributors towards environmental woes and are also in a position where they can make a significant difference in protecting the environment.

A business, in this environmental and climate change sensitive age need not only comply with the regulatory standards, of tick boxing the regulatory requirements, but must constantly strive to adopt and improve its business practices and make them more ecologically sustainable.⁴ It must consider the negative environmental impact of its business activities and or supply chain. Businesses ought to look beyond making short term gains, but consider the long term impact its decisions have on the natural environment.

An environmental conscious business is creative and innovative. It develops new priorities, behaviors and approaches that are environmentally conscious within its operations and supply chains.

It is appreciated that businesses worry that environmental consciousness may negatively impact on a business' ability to generate a profit. However there is a business case for environmental consciousness, it has the potential to reduce your expenses in the medium to long term. For example, making sure

¹ Guiding principle on Business and Human Rights pillar number two.

² Section 73 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe 2013.

³ Section 44 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe 2013.

⁴ Section 73 of the Constitution captures the principle of sustainable development.



that your business is more energy efficient will save you a significant amount on energy costs and help you to improve your bottom line. Performing a cost-benefit analysis will allow you to compare the benefits of environmental conscious practices with the total cost of implementation. Environmental consciousness is good business.

Given the prominence of the social environmental movements and the advocacy around environmental justice. No business today should be conducted without an awareness of the tenuous balance between the health of the environment and corporate profits.

It is quite simply good business practice for executives to be aware that their businesses' long-term sustainability, and indeed its profitability, depend greatly on their safeguarding the natural environment. Disregarding this interrelationship between business and the environment not only elicits public condemnation, but it also risks destroying the viability of the business entity itself.