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مجموعة عمل الإمارات للبيئة
EMIRATES ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP



Ministerial declaration of the 2017 UN Environment Assembly “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet” Preliminary draft of the ministerial outcome document

Released on 21 September 2017

Feedback from the Emirates Environmental Group

United Arab Emirates

1. When aiming for sustainable development, there should also be a focus on Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration – “Environmental issues are best handled with participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided. “

Thus, people must have access to environmental information for the purpose of knowledge-sharing and policy development – aspects that are key when working towards sustainable development at the local, regional and national levels.

2. Some of the terms used in the document – “beat pollution in all areas”; “pollution-free planet” may sound as being too strong and sometimes, unachievable.

EEG believes a better method of communicating the same is to focus on terms such as ‘reduction of pollution’ or a ‘minimum-pollution planet’.

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3. Continuing with previous point, the document could also talk more about recycling and proper disposal of pollutants. The problem does not lie with the pollutant itself, but with the attitude of those using it.

Focusing on – Reduce, Reuse and Recycle is more feasible than complete banning. And this is more achievable in the long term too.

4. The document can also highlight some approaches that have worked around the world for a more positive outlook. These could be inspirational and beneficial to every member state working towards sustainable development. For example:

- Odd-even bans on vehicles to reduce air pollution in Paris;
- Copenhagen's prioritisation of bikes over cars;
- Oslo's no-car zones; and
- Bangalore converting 6,000 of its buses to compressed natural gas.

5. Even though the document does mention it, the concept of Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) as well as green economy must be highlighted as they are essential links in achieving the goal.

6. A mention of the programmes under the 10YFP (10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns) and how to implement/utilise them can be a cornerstone of the document. These include:

- Sustainable Public Procurement;
- Sustainable Tourism;
- Consumer Information for SCP;
- Sustainable Buildings and Construction;
- Sustainable Lifestyles and Education; and
- Sustainable Food Systems

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We hope some of these suggestions will be considered by you and look forward to receiving the next document in the near future. We would like to, once again, reiterate our appreciation to the wonderful work you are doing.

Thank you.

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