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## **United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme**

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### **142nd meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme**

Nairobi, 10 May 2018

10:00 am to 1:00 pm and 2:30 pm to 5:30 pm.

Conference Room 1

### **Note by the Secretariat on the development of the UNEA3 implementation plan “Towards a pollution-free planet”**

This note is prepared by the Secretariat in support of the implementation of paragraph 14 of Ministerial Declaration which calls for the “Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to submit a plan for implementation in consultation with the Committee of Permanent Representatives, for [Member States] consideration by no later than the next United Nations Environment Assembly”, “building on the outcomes of the Third Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly”. The note presents a plan of development for the implementation plan of the third session of the UN Environment Assembly for consideration by Member States.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNEA3 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN “TOWARDS A POLLUTION-FREE PLANET”**

Member States adopted a Ministerial Declaration as a key outcome of the 3<sup>rd</sup> session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA3) which gathered in Nairobi (Kenya) from 4-6 December under the overarching topic “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet”.

Paragraph 14 of the Ministerial Declaration calls for the “Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to submit a plan for implementation in consultation with the Committee of Permanent Representatives, for [Member States] consideration by no later than the next United Nations Environment Assembly”, “building on the outcomes of the Third Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly”.

At UNEA3, the multi-stakeholder meeting, leadership dialogues and science-policy-business forum noted in the discussions that tackling pollution contributes to all dimensions of sustainable development by fighting poverty, improving health, creating decent jobs and protecting natural resources and biodiversity. The fact that economic and social costs of pollution remain underappreciated also emerged as an important barrier to act. Some specific key messages for tackling pollution include the importance of: (i) science, technology and innovation as key enablers, (ii) legal and regulatory frameworks, (iii) holistic intersectoral policy approaches, (iv) strengthening partnerships with the civil society, the private sector and public decision-makers, and (v) building public awareness, communicating and building capacity of all citizens – notably among the youth.

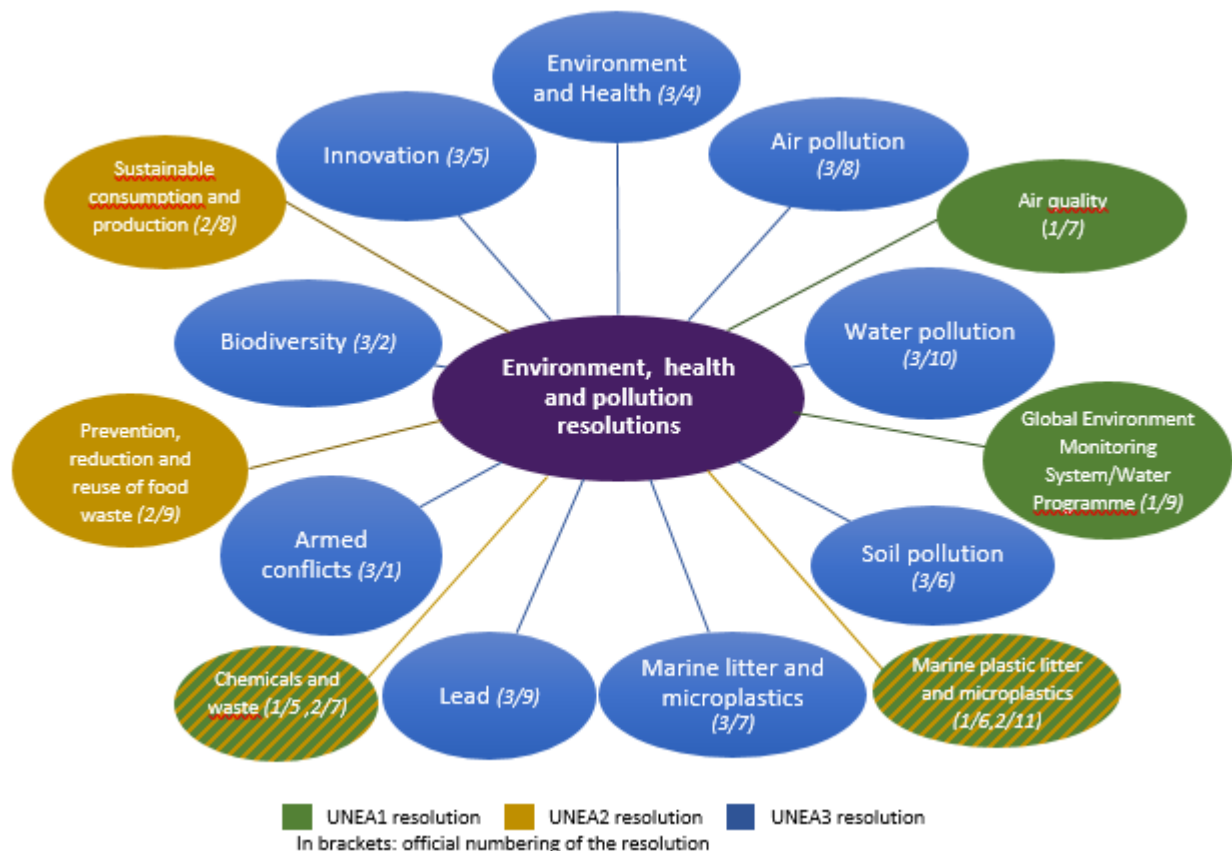
The Implementation Plan draws from the above guidance at UNEA 3 and will be the main vehicle for organizing and presenting the follow-up to UNEA3 on pollution. As outlined below, it will build on the outcomes of the third UN Environment Assembly (A). It will also seek to address the gaps and challenges to addressing pollution that were identified in the Executive Director’s report to UNEA3 (<http://web.unep.org/environmentassembly/report-executive-director>) (B). The process to develop the Plan (C) and its proposed initial key elements (D) are also introduced.

### **A. Outcomes of UNEA3**

The Plan will build upon the following outcomes on UNEA3 and, as relevant, elements of UNEA1 and UNEA2, while also looking forward at the linkages with the theme of UNEA4 “Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production”, as sustainable consumption and production practices and innovation provide important opportunities to make further progress, in particular to pollution prevention.

- 1) ***The Ministerial Declaration “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet”***  
(<https://papersmart.unon.org/resolution/> )

- 2) *The nine UNEA3 resolutions related to the environment, health and pollution nexus, as well as the relevant resolutions from UNEA1 and 2* (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Environment health and pollution-related resolutions adopted by the UN Environment Assembly**

The following elements cut across these resolutions and will form the basis of the Implementation Plan:

- ✓ Science, data, access to information, reporting, Sustainable Development Goals
  - ✓ Methodologies and tools development, capacity-building, strengthening of technical and institutional capacity
  - ✓ Standards, regulations and integrated policy development
  - ✓ Education, training and communication
  - ✓ Industry, private sector engagement, (incl. circular economy/lifecycle approaches) and NGO engagement
  - ✓ Regional cooperation, partnership building with all relevant stakeholders, including UN Agencies
- 3) **Voluntary Commitments:** 405 Voluntary Commitments were submitted by the end of December 2017 from governments, civil society and business (Box 1). Commitments fall into four broad categories:
- ✓ Expanding existing pollution reduction and control activities and policies
  - ✓ Removing barriers to de-polluting activities;
  - ✓ Increasing awareness through education and targeted, public awareness campaigns;
  - ✓ Investing in research and development

**Box 1: Voluntary Commitments:**

A total of 69 governments, 97 civil society organizations and 23 businesses provided details of their current and future actions for tackling pollution. The majority of government commitments include policies and actions for directly controlling pollution at source, building resource efficient, circular economies and raising public awareness. Civil society commitments are largely focused on public campaigns and clean-up projects. Business commitments cover a wide range of actions including investment in research and development, reduction of carbon footprint and avoiding pollution throughout their supply chains.

- 4) **#BeatPollution campaign:** The campaign raised awareness of the many existing forms of pollution and encouraged individuals, governments, businesses and civil society to act and save lives around the world. Almost 2.5 million pledges were made on web and social media. Since the close of the UN Environment Assembly, the #BeatPollution hashtag has maintained its momentum in the social conversation and has been used an average of 682 times daily on Twitter.

**B. Addressing the gaps and challenges to addressing pollution identified in the Executive Director's report to UNEA3:**

1. **Knowledge gaps:** Inadequate information and data on pollution sources, pathways, impacts, alternatives for improved choices, regulation and decisions and awareness raising. Many elements of the resolutions aim at addressing this gap, as well as key existing workstreams of UN Environment work (e.g. GEO process, UN Environment Live, monitoring of some Sustainable Development Goals, among others). The requests put forward in some UNEA3 resolutions to develop reports on key elements of the pollution agenda linking environment and human health and well-being (e.g. soil pollution, pesticides and fertilizers, antimicrobial resistance or the development of a World Water Quality Report) will contribute to stimulate science-based decisions to prevent and address pollution.
2. **Implementation gap:** Poor regulatory and institutional functioning; limited technical and institutional capacity, knowledge and experience sharing on what has worked or not worked. Most resolutions emphasize the need to enhance the regulatory and legislative framework to prevent and address pollution and its enforcement, as well as to work across sectors and departments, and build capacity in order to overcome siloes.
3. **Infrastructure gap:** Absence of infrastructure to manage and control pollution. This gap is only partially addressed in the resolutions, pointing to the need to work in close collaboration with institutions and partners active in this field, in particular development banks and agencies, as well as other UN agencies such as UNDP or UNIDO in particular. The consultative process defined to shape the Implementation Plan aims at mobilizing them.
4. **Limited leadership by financial institutions and industry** on pollution. Most resolutions call for increased partnerships with all stakeholders including private and finance sector actors. The voluntary commitments process can play a critical role in stimulating new commitments from these stakeholders in particular. Engagement with key partners, such as UNEP Finance Initiative but not only, can also play a major role, as well as the current efforts to increase UN Environment Programme's work with the private sector.

5. Insufficient recognition by different actors that **consumption choices have pollution consequences**.

Education, awareness-raising programme and communication campaigns are key. It is anticipated for the #BeatPollution campaign to continue actively promoting more sustainable behaviours of all actors, alongside other major campaigns such as Cleanseas and Breathelife. Policy and fiscal incentives in order to stimulate behaviour change from all stakeholders at all levels will also be critical.

6. Mispricing and **invisibility of ecosystem values and absence of internalization of pollution costs**

Although most UNEA3 resolutions do not necessarily emphasize the need to address this gap, this is already an important aspect of ongoing UN Environment Programme work and of other partners that will need to be fully acknowledged in the Implementation Plan going forward.

### **C. Process to develop the Plan**

- ✓ The resolutions provide mandates for UN Environment Programme but also invites Member States, other UN Agencies, Multilateral Environment Agreements and stakeholders, including private sector, to take action. The Plan will therefore need to reflect that inclusiveness and collective responsibility.
- ✓ A combination of communication, stakeholder mobilization elements and measuring and reporting on progress made will be needed in order to mobilize all relevant actors (governments, business and industry, UN Agencies and Multilateral Environment Agreements, local authorities and city networks, scientists and experts, civil society, individuals).
- ✓ The Plan will be developed through consultations with various stakeholder groups, mostly through webinars, as well as with member States through CPR subcommittee and committee meetings, and a multi-stakeholder meeting which will take place on 13-14 June in Paris.
- ✓ The consultation process aims at acknowledging, engaging and making the best of each stakeholder group leadership potential. In particular, it aims at enabling stakeholders to:
  - Provide feedback/suggestions on the main elements of the Implementation Plan
  - Indicate how they can support the implementation of the Plan
  - Indicate what they are planning to do in addition/as a complement to prevent and address pollution, especially with regards to 2 important gaps that need to be addressed i.e. pollution infrastructure, and lack of leadership from business and finance sectors, and possibly identify quick wins
  - Provide suggestions to help mobilize additional stakeholders in taking action

### **D. Proposed key elements of the Plan**

#### ***Objectives:***

- ✓ To prevent, better manage and reduce pollution, through the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration of the 3<sup>rd</sup> session of the UN Environment Assembly and resolutions addressing the environment, health and pollution nexus;
- ✓ To foster a deeper interest in and global awareness of pollution and its consequences on ecosystems and human health and well-being;
- ✓ To actively involve Member States, businesses and stakeholders to prevent and address pollution;

- ✓ To improve consultation, communication and coordination across stakeholders and across sectors and increase the number of joint actions at the subnational, national, regional and international levels;
- ✓ To strengthen coordination, leadership and coherent action among existing partnerships, initiatives, organizations and institutions working on pollution.

**Timeframe:** It is proposed for the Plan to be linked with the Sustainable Development Goals. The proposed time horizon for the Plan is thus 2030 but concrete activities could be defined for shorter timeframes, i.e. in line with the Medium-Term Strategy (2018-2021) and UNEA5

***Key action areas of the Plan will draw from the resolutions, the voluntary commitments, with additional inputs from partners. The following action areas are proposed so far:***

- ✓ Science for pollution prevention and control in order to address the knowledge gap and provide access to pollution data, develop assessment and science-policy reports, as well as facilitate knowledge sharing and informing decision-making for solutions. The role of digital technologies and how they can be used to collect local data, share and act on pollution will also be considered.
- ✓ Incentivizing change in behaviors and economic policies and choices will be central to the success of the Plan. Taking tangible action and making real progress is critical to show the UN Environment Assembly's real value. Activities will include identification and sharing of good practices from across the world, development of integrated methodologies and tools, capacity-building and institutional strengthening, work on economics of pollution and fiscal policies, standards and regulations, promotion of technology access, sustainable consumption and production and clean investments, and cleaning of legacy sites. As many of the pollution problems need long term interventions to see results, there is a need for open exchange of good practices to achieve continual progress.
- ✓ Public advocacy and communication, in particular through the continuation of the #BeatPollution campaign, as well as work on education and sharing of good practices.
- ✓ Measuring progress on the pollution agenda will as far as possible be based on automated process and open data, streamlined with existing reporting frameworks, such as those for the Multilateral Environmental Agreements, and using and scaling up activities, structures and processes already programmed by the United Nations Environment Programme or mandated through resolutions. For the follow-up of voluntary commitments made at UNEA3, a light mechanism will be designed for collecting information to show evidence that the voluntary commitments are making a difference and that progress is made to move towards a pollution-free planet. This will be important to keep the momentum, ensure that key implementation gaps are being addressed, show that actions on pollution support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals, demonstrate impact at different levels and encourage Member States and stakeholders to act or do more.
- ✓ Mobilizing leaders and partners, including financial investors, development banks, private sector partners and NGOs, will take place to maximize UN Environment Programme's reach and influence others to contribute to solving the issues. Leadership of regional fora, including on environment and health, as well as south-south and triangular cooperation will play a key role. Leveraging existing networks, partnerships and initiatives acting on thematic pollution areas – and possibly bringing synergies across these existing partnerships - will be critical to the success of the Plan.