

5th Annual Sub-Committee Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

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Statement of the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (CEH) on behalf of the International Nitrogen Initiative (INI) concerning the UNEA-3 Implementation Plan “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet”.

Thank you Madam Chair. The UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, makes this statement on behalf of the International Nitrogen Initiative. Following the encouragement of the chair yesterday, I also take this opportunity to introduce myself as Prof. Mark Sutton, based in Edinburgh, Scotland.

We thank Her Excellency the Ambassador of Costa Rica and the Representative of Germany for their call to urgency for a ‘Pollution Free Planet’. We similarly thank Director Noronha of UN Environment for her clear presentation and the underpinning work by the team: we very much appreciate the focus on improving coherency in a focused way. We were also grateful to take part in the June 2018 Brainstorming Meeting in Paris as part of the UNEA-3 follow-up process, and are pleased to see ideas for the UNEA-3 Implementation Plan crystallizing in the Annotated Draft Outline (ADO).

We welcome the ADO as a first step on the way to an operational approach for the world to bring together pollution threats, which must be a foundation to ‘Beating Pollution’. As part of this, we here address the question of coordination between UN Environment and Multi-lateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), as well as with other international processes.

To a certain extent, the ADO comes across as strong of heart and weak of limbs. In this analogy of a body, UNEP represents the heart, while MEAs are the limbs. We see the need to strengthen the connection with the limbs.

We therefore particularly welcome the proposal for a ‘Pollution Coordination Platform’ as described in the ADO. However, we are confused by the term ‘Platform’. What does it mean here? For example, the ADO describes two platforms, which seem to imply different things. Firstly, a ‘**Knowledge Sharing Platform**’ is mentioned. This sounds like it might imply a web-based system and associated databases, with a focus on activity by UN Environment staff. Secondly, the ADO proposes a ‘**Coordination Platform**’. This sounds like it could be a multi-actor process of people, where UN Environment staff convene wider engagement. For example, we make comparison with use of the word ‘Platform’ by the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, IPBES. We do not offer any comment on the character or approach of IPBES, but simply wish to point out the potential for confusion in the word ‘Platform’.

Our hope is that a ‘**Pollution Coordination Platform**’ implies a proposal to cooperate between people and groups, where UN Environment works as a convener to bring together Member States, for example as a sub-group of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR), critically involving key representatives from the relevant MEAs. **Such a forum is currently missing, but is urgently needed to provide the opportunity for the MEAs to learn from each other under the direction of Member States, coordinating to develop synergies and avoid pollution trade-offs.**

The goal should be a mutual sharing that is so efficient in making the links and addressing synergies that Member States and MEAs find it exceptionally attractive to contribute and to learn from each other, e.g. through annual meetings as Special Segments of CPR and UNEA. We emphasize the need for a **cost-effective, proportionate and nimble** approach, considering the urgency of action.

In this respect, we want to highlight the example provided by the **International Nitrogen Management System (INMS)**. INMS is recently established as a science-support process for global and

regional nitrogen policy development. It is being mobilized through the Global Environment Facility (GEF) project “Towards INMS” (2016-2021), where UN Environment is the ‘Implementing Agency’ and INI is the ‘Executing Agency’, as represented by CEH. INMS is supported by 6M USD from GEF and 54M USD through co-finance from its network of 80 partner organisations. Further information on INMS is provided in the **PDF leaflet** as an Information Document to this CPR meeting.

At core, INMS is a science-led support process for policy development. It is working to link pollution and other issues related to nitrogen as a foundation to mobilize evidence and identification of solutions, and to improve understanding of the barriers, trade-offs, synergies and opportunities. INMS is now starting to prepare **guidance documentation, tools and future scenarios**, for example establishing ‘Shared Socio-economic Pathways for Nitrogen’ and examining a potential global goal to “**Halve Nitrogen Waste**”. INMS is currently scoping preparation of the first ever **Global Nitrogen Assessment** for launch in 2022, which should be of major interest to UNEA-6.

INMS addresses multiple issues relevant for pollution, including air pollution, freshwater and marine pollution, climate change, biodiversity, soils, human health, food, while fostering development of blue, green and circular economy approaches. The development of INMS offers a means to underpin and articulate the development of **triple-wins**, the urgent need for which has been highlighted in the opening of this 5th Annual Sub-Committee Meeting by UN Executive Director, Erik Solheim.

While INMS has been developed as a science-led process, it also needs a ‘**receiving body**’ of Member States. This is vital to guide INMS priorities (given the investment through GEF and to maximize the benefits), to inform scenario development, to facilitate more-effective working with multiple MEAs, and to take-note of the emerging implications.

As explained during the side event to this 5th Annual Sub-Committee Meeting (Wednesday 24th October, see presentations available on the Paper-Smart Portal), **Four Options for Better Coordination** across nitrogen policies have been identified:

- Option 1:** Nitrogen fragmentation across policy frameworks. This is the *status quo*.
- Option 2:** Nitrogen leadership under one existing issue-based policy framework. Feedback shows that this suffers from the limitations of existing mandates.
- Option 3:** A new international convention to address the nitrogen challenge. Wide consultation shows that there is currently little willingness for this option.
- Option 4:** An ‘Inter-governmental nitrogen coordination mechanism’, for example under the mandate of CPR and UNEA.

It is for Member States to guide on their preferred option, but Option 4 has so far received the most support. This is based on informal consultation by INI over the last 4 years, following conceptualization of the idea for Option 4 in the wings of UNEA-1. By the term ‘**coordination mechanism**’ we understand a regular process of governments meeting together with key representatives of relevant MEAs, with the support of UN Environment, INMS and others.

If we compare these ideas for an ‘**Inter-governmental Nitrogen Coordination Mechanism**’ with the concept for a ‘**Pollution Coordination Platform**’ proposed in the ADO, then we may be rather close.

We would therefore like to take this opportunity to offer the **Nitrogen Challenge as an illustration or ‘pilot’** of working between Member States, MEAs, INMS and others in developing the way towards an ‘Inter-governmental Pollution Coordination Mechanism or Platform’. In this respect, INMS already has funding through GEF and its partners (e.g., in contributing to travel, accommodation and food costs of delegates and in supporting organization costs of the pilot). **Reflecting on the ideas in the ADO, we consider that the Nitrogen Challenge offers a timely example to demonstrate how CPR may bring the heart and limbs together for a healthy body, fit to race towards a Pollution Free Planet.**

Finally, we are currently working with UN Environment colleagues to prepare the next annual INMS plenary meeting, hosted at the Nairobi UN Headquarters (INMS-4) and tentatively scheduled for 29 April to 3 May 2019. **We therefore here invite CPR members and other key government representatives from Member States to join with leaders of the relevant MEAs to an *ad hoc* information sharing on 29-30 April 2019, to which we also propose to invite key Business and Civil Society leaders.** As this is scheduled shortly after UNEA-4, the meeting will allow relevant conclusions of UNEA-4 to be promptly followed up. Experience from the ‘nitrogen pilot’ could then be used by Member States and others to inform further CPR discussion on what is needed from a wider ‘Pollution Coordination Platform’, convened under the leadership of UN Environment.

We here invite reactions from Member States and others through the CPR Secretariat and look forward to hearing your reactions.

Appendix: Criteria for Priority Pollutant Issues

During the 5th Annual Subcommittee Meeting of the CPR, it was pointed out by the representative from **XXXXXXXXXX country** that there is a need to identify criteria for priority pollutants to be addressed by CPR. INI agrees that, while a comprehensive approach to pollution is needed, criteria would be of benefit, especially given the short- and long-term budgetary needs.

We suggest that each ‘Pollution Issue’ (i.e., topic or topic grouping) could be considered according to the following **Priority-Pollutant Criteria**, which focus on the provision of ‘added value’:

1. **Is the Pollution Issue a major global or multi-regional concern** that prevents progress towards a Pollution Free Planet? Or if only a mid-level concern, does it play a key role in making progress with a major concern?
2. **Is action on the Pollution Issue currently missing under other MEAs, or only partly addressed?** For example, are there major gaps that prevent progress towards a Pollution Free Planet? Among others, these gaps could include insufficient geographic coverage of existing MEAs and missing intergovernmental policy instruments.
3. **Does the Pollution Issue link *several environment concerns*?** In particular, are there obvious synergies and trade-offs between pollutants that combine in this issue, so that a more-coherent approach would be expected to facilitate progress towards a Pollution Free Planet?
4. **Does addressing the Pollution Issue offer significant benefits for promoting *economic development***, for example by mobilizing the Circular Economy?
5. **Does addressing the Pollution Issue offer significant *health benefits*** in addition to the core goal of achieving environmental benefits?
6. **Does addressing the Pollution Issue offer generic lessons** that can help make progress in overcoming barriers to a Pollution Free Planet, e.g. innovative approaches to environmental policy, new concepts to link consumption and production, innovative financing models, transformative business or civil society partnerships with Member States.

This list of draft criteria emphasizes the ‘**triple-wins**’ as noted by Erik Solheim. INI considers that the Nitrogen Challenge meets all these criteria, highlighting the need for urgent attention by CPR. However, we recognize that the criteria should reflect a wide range of societal perspectives. We therefore invite CRP and UN Environment colleagues to improve and add to this proposal.