



**EU & MS Opening Statement for the First substantive session of the AHOEWG on
Global Pact for the Environment**

14-18 January 2019, Nairobi

Co-Chairs, Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The EU and its MS continue to support the initiative ‘Towards a Global Pact for the Environment’, to strengthen international environmental law and international environment-related instruments and their implementation. As the latest alarming scientific reports, including from IPCC, IPBES and IRP demonstrate, there is an urgent need to enhance and raise ambition for environmental protection to ensure sustainable development for all. Without ensuring a healthy and sound environment as the basis of our livelihoods for present and future generations we cannot achieve sustainable development and implement the 2030 Agenda. As highlighted in several UN reports and at the High Level Political Forum the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda is where progress is lagging behind furthest.

Collective action is required to address environmental challenges that are of global concern. The EU and its MS recognize the potential role of this initiative to raise the profile of environmental issues on the global, regional, and domestic levels in order to increase political will and ambition to protect the environment, and we encourage all participants to take advantage of the momentum towards this goal during this week’s discussions.

The process launched by the UN General Assembly Resolution 72/277 provides the opportunity to discuss concrete proposals on how to contribute to a higher level of environmental protection; and we support the goal of the ad hoc open-ended working group to make clear recommendations to the General Assembly during the first half of 2019.

Let me take the opportunity to thank the UN Secretary General and UN Environment Programme for preparing the report on "gaps in international law and environment-related instruments". We welcome the report as a good basis for our discussions this week and as a key input for reflections on proposals how to improve environmental protection through this process. The report provides a good general overview of international environmental law, environmental principles, environmental-related instruments, environmental governance and implementation and effectiveness of international environmental law. At the same time we note that certain issues are addressed in more detail than others, while certain gaps and other aspects are not addressed.

We consider that it will be necessary to progress beyond merely discussing the UN Secretary General report and to arrive at concrete recommendations. In doing so, the report itself should not become the subject nor the centre of negotiations.

We acknowledge that there are gaps in in the current body of international environmental law and environment related instruments and their implementation. We should use this process to discuss options for addressing gaps identified by the UN Secretary General report, as well as other gaps identified by member states, focusing on those where this process can provide possible solutions.

On this basis, we believe the ad hoc open-ended working group can make clear recommendations to the General Assembly, with regard to the options which should be pursued further.

Co-Chairs, Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

The EU and its Member States have come to Nairobi this week with an open mind and are keen to listen to the views of others on potential areas to strengthen international environmental law and environment-related instruments and their implementation.

Before closing, I would like to highlight two points that are particularly important for us:

- We need to ensure that any outcome of this ad hoc open-ended working group process does not lead to a weakening of existing environmental protection standards or undermines existing processes and relevant legal instruments, as also highlighted in OP 9 of Resolution 72/277. Rather this process should reinforce current protection standards while aiming to strengthening environmental protection at all levels.
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- We also would like to reiterate that the EU and its Member States attach great importance to ensuring openness, transparency and inclusiveness, including for civil society. We therefore welcome the participation of the civil society representatives and look forward to their contributions to the discussion.

The EU and its MS look forward to our discussions this week and to constructive cooperation with all Delegations in order to strengthen the environmental dimension for the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.