

**Statement by H.E. Edgar Gutiérrez-Espeleta, Minister of Environment and Energy of
Costa Rica and President of the UN Environment Assembly to the Fourth Annual
Subcommittee Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives**

Dear friends and colleagues,

The aim of this fourth annual subcommittee is for member states with the support of all stakeholders to work together to review the status of implementation of the decisions made by the Environment Assembly and to continue to build an ambitious 2017 Environment Assembly.

Over this week our work has been conducted under the spirit of transparency, stakeholder engagement, follow-up of resolutions, and efficient and full communication among us.

I expect that over the next two days, we will continue to build consensus on outstanding issues such as the outcomes of the Assembly, and the inputs that will be required from the Executive Director, to support our processes.

I wish in this regard to emphasise the model of joint cooperation between the Committee and the Bureau of the Assembly, which has emerged from the October Preparatory Retreat. I underscore the agreements reached at the joint retreat, in which all participants agreed that the 2017 Environment Assembly should strive for a strong political statement as the Outcome Document. The target groups for the outcome document will be those working in: political leadership, UN System, High Level Political Forum, private sector, civil society, and all citizens at large. I look forward to receiving your feedback on this, and am interested in hearing what you want. I will present my vision for the Document at the next joint meeting of the both bureaux scheduled after this Subcommittee.

Cooperation is critical for the achievement of our goals. Under my Presidency, there has been increased cooperation between UN Environment, Multilateral Environmental Agreements, and Regional and Political Groups towards the common goal of a successful third Assembly. This has created openness and transparency, ushering in a new era of mutual trust.

We must remember that those in this room today – we are champions of environment and development. It is up to each of us to ensure a successful Environment Assembly, and that cannot be achieved if the current needs of the Assembly are not addressed. With less than 9

months until the 2017 Environment Assembly, I call on member states to act with diligence and integrity.

I have heard growing support to the idea of making this Assembly one that is open to commitments and pledges to progress the reduction and elimination of pollution. I have also heard the growing interest to see greater contributions from the citizens and the private sector to set the course towards a pollution free planet.

On the preparations for the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, I note with eagerness the progress achieved so far. I look forward to receiving the recommendations on concluding the wording of the slogan for the Assembly, and ask that member states note the importance of putting the slogan out into the public domain in order to garner support as early as possible. I invite you to reach consensus on this matter over the next two days.

The timelines for submission of draft resolutions is another key task that must be tackled together. This requires members making a commitment to deliver short, concise, on time resolutions with enough time for translation. In this regard, I welcome the proposal of the Chair of the Committee.

I hope that the structure of the high level segment will be discussed in terms of providing in-depth reflection on the theme, enhanced visibility of the UN Environment Assembly and a critical link to the High Level Political Forum and other important global meetings. I have heard members' calls for opening up opportunities for Ministers to deliver statements and make their national positions known globally, as well as to hold interactive discussions in-between sessions that move the environmental agenda forward. Successful time management will be key to achieving this.

The Ministerial Outcome Document / Declaration will need to begin to take shape over the next few months, with an aim to finalize this during the first day of the Assembly. We must strive towards agreement on a clear, collaborative Outcome Document before the Assembly starts. I will be open to receiving your inputs soon, to begin this process.

Lastly, I remind my colleagues here of the gravity of the Assembly budget. There remains an urgency of the funding provisions towards UNEA-3. I call upon member states to heed this call and strive towards further support for the Assembly.

Governments around the world expect that this will be an Assembly of concrete action rather than of deliberation – with major commitments and pledges announced at national, local and grassroots levels in the lead up to, and during the Assembly. The Assembly is expected to allow for interactive discussions to move the environmental agenda forward, and give ministers and other high-level officials the freedom to make national pledges and commitments – as pioneers of their respective countries – that their legislative authorities can follow through on, with progressive actions.

Science is expected to support our commitments. World Health Organisation statistics for 2012 show that 56 million people died worldwide and of those, nine million died from pollution related deaths. In other words, pollution killed one in seven people. Pollution is also one of the major causes of disease burden in most countries – and this is on the increase. Chronic obstructive respiratory disease (COPD) due to indoor air pollution is responsible for the death of more than 1 million people every year. Yet, pollution is the single global problem that can be managed and eliminated in our lifetime. Environmental governance actions can, and do, make the difference in what humanity is willing to accept as tolerable and what it cannot.

I want to encourage each of you here today to consider your role in the bigger picture, to see this subcommittee as the means to enact greater cooperation. Costa Rica wants fair and sustainable development that maximizes the benefits for our communities without harming our planet or polluting the environment. Our actions must also motivate citizen action – translate into real outcomes for real people – not just voice goals but deliver on them. And one of the ways to accomplish this is through cooperation with civil society representatives.

As Minister of Environment, and President of the United Nations Environment Assembly, I remain committed to a successful Assembly, outcome driven and focused. I reiterate my previous message: Costa Rica firmly believes that without a healthy environment, humanity cannot prosper. Costa Rica wants dignity for all, peace and health for all, prosperity for all. A healthy environment, that serves humanity. I look forward to working with each of you, both individually and as part of your respective groups, to deliver an Outcome Document that reflects these aspirations. Let us work together towards a successful Assembly and to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Thank you very much for your time today.