

30 June 2017

Feedback to the Draft Outline Document for the Ministerial Outcome Document of the 2017 UN Environment Assembly “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet”

The Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) is grateful for the opportunity to provide comments to the Draft Outline Document for the Ministerial Outcome Document of the 2017 UN Environment Assembly “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet”.

CIEL welcomes the focus of UNEA-3 on the objective of a pollution-free planet. Delivering the planet and communities and peoples from the adverse impacts of pollution is an essential pre-requisite to achieve broader goals set by the international community such as the Sustainable Development Goals.

We believe that the Declaration to be adopted in December could provide additional momentum and strengthen ongoing efforts to tackled pollution if it would include a stronger focus on the four following key themes.

1. **Coherence between relevant international frameworks.** Many international frameworks and agreements, including Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement, include obligations and long term objectives that are highly relevant to the elimination of pollution. In order to strengthen the contribution that the declaration could make to sustainable development, this linkages should be made more explicit in the declaration.
2. **Promoting the Right to Health and to a Healthy Environment.** Pollution impacts the realisation of human rights, in particular the right to health and the right to a healthy environment. The Declaration should reiterate the existing human rights obligations of governments on these matters, recognise that the elimination of pollution is a prerequisite for the full realisation of human rights and call on human rights institutions to contribute to define the obligations of states and of the private sector in this context.
3. **Strengthening Public Participation and Empowering Communities.** Empowered communities can play a critical role in addressing the causes and the consequences of pollution on health and ecosystems. The guarantee – at all levels of governance – of access to information, public participation in decision-making related to the environment, and access to judicial remedies should be a priority in the realisation of the vision of a world free of pollution. The continued promotion of these rights should rely both on existing regional frameworks where those exists (such as under the UN-ECE and UN-ECLAC) and on international frameworks.

We have provided more specific textual proposals to the draft outline document of the ministerial declaration in the document included in annex.

We look forward to future opportunities to support the UNEA president and the UNEP in the preparation of the UNEA.

ANNEX – CIEL Textual Proposals

Draft Outline Document for the Ministerial Outcome Document of the 2017 UN Environment Assembly
“Towards a Pollution-Free Planet”

This draft outline has been prepared by the President of the Assembly for consideration by Member States and stakeholders. It includes a structured list of initial points shared by the President with all Members of the Assembly on 8 May 2017 and Member States and stakeholders are invited to continue to share their views and contributions.

Member States, including through their respective regional Ministerial Fora and political groups, are invited to send their inputs to the Secretariat (unep.sgb@unep.org) at the latest by the 30 June 2017. In early July, the President will submit a Zero Draft Document for consideration by Member States taking into account all the feedback and positions received with a view to producing a coherent, concise, and action-oriented document.

Introduction:

- As the world’s Ministers of Environment, we must be determined to take the bold and necessary steps to address pollution at every level in order to protect the health and lives of all people on this planet, the developmental aspirations of current and future generations, and the immeasurable wealth of the environment and the natural resources upon which we all depend;
- The UN Environment Programme is mandated to serve as the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda. The UN Environment Assembly is the highest-level decision making body on the environment. Both are key in keeping the state of the environment under review and in addressing the vital environmental challenges of global and regional significance, which we are facing today, such as pollution;
- We recognize that both, our UN Environment Assembly and UN Environment Programme, cannot tackle the challenge of pollution alone and in this regard, we urge the other inter-governmental bodies, UN specialized agencies, funds and programmes, and all other stakeholders, including business leaders, to contribute towards our effort;
- We invite all governments, businesses, communities and people, and all other stakeholders to work towards a pollution-free planet by determining their own contributions and commitments to achieve our vision.
- We recognise the interlinkages between addressing pollution and realising other existing international commitments such as many of the Sustainable Development Goals, human rights obligations, and those of the Paris Agreement.

Vision:

- Our goal, collectively, must be a pollution-free planet. Urgent action is our responsibility;
- Reducing pollution means positively transforming our production and consumption patterns, and eventually our world. It will help ensure that we, as humanity, make a leap towards a healthier, safer, brighter, more sustainable future, with benefits for all;
- More people will be able to leave poverty behind;

- We will protect the health of everyone on this planet, today and in the future, upholding states' respective obligations with regards to the right to health, and right to a healthy environment;
- Safer and cleaner technologies will drive our economies;
- We will transform our societies to become sustainable, resource efficient and able to support the needs of present and future generations;
- Empowering communities and civil society through access to environmental information, participation in decision making and access to judicial remedies at all level of governance will ensure that citizens can be active actors when tackling this challenge and protecting their health and environment.
- Peace, security and stability will help us promote inclusive societies, which respect human rights and gender empowerment, as well as the environment;
- We will increase global, regional and national knowledge, awareness and education around pollution sources, impacts, and solutions.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Pollution affects everybody. It is a massive global challenge with consequences far beyond the environment;
- The increasing pollution of our air, water, land and seas is a major obstacle towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals set by our leaders in 2015;
- Pollution is destroying our ecosystems, affecting human health, hampering long-term economic growth and exacerbating social inequalities;
- Pollution is an individual and collective concern the world over, threatening the health and well-being of all of us;
- We welcome the many pledges and voluntary commitments being made by Governments, business and civil society as actions towards the achievement of our vision in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, and commit to take the following steps/actions;
- The solutions to reduce and eliminate pollution are available, and moving onto a more sustainable path lies in our hands.

Transformative Steps and Actions:

- Reduce all waste, through consumption reduction (especially of single-used products), increased reuse and recycling of materials, closed material cycles, innovation, and improved transfer of and access to clean technologies;
- Work with the private sector to identify and implement cost internalisation, market based solutions and alternatives to end all forms of pollution;
- Improve the health of the environment and ecosystems, and the health of people everywhere, including through stronger, integrated, and coherent policies and laws to reduce pollution, including standards for air, land and water quality based on scientific evidence and data;
- Strengthen the implementation and enforcement of environmental laws and policies at all levels through capacity building and institutional strengthening, including monitoring systems;
- Eliminate major sources of marine litter, such as microfibers and microplastics, ~~and~~ the excessive, wasteful usage of single-use plastic by 202X, and strengthen the applicable legal and policy framework as appropriate;

- Accelerate efforts to achieve the sound management of all chemicals and wastes, including eliminating lead in paint by 202X;
- Transition to agroecological practices for all food production across the world;
- Reduce, by half, the amount of untreated wastewater entering water bodies by 202X;
- Substantially improve air quality in cities to within healthy levels for human consumption by 202X;
- Work with the local governments of the world towards promoting sustainable models of urban development that address, in an integrated manner, cleaner and livable cities;
- Significantly expand the application and distribution in all countries of the best available science and technologies available towards combating the threat of pollution in all its forms;
- Expand existing and create new multi-stakeholder partnerships, bringing together Governments, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations system and the people of the world.