



CH-3003 Bern, FOEN, KOS

United Nations Environment Programme  
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Our reference: KOS  
Contact person: KOS  
**Bern, 30 August 2017**

## **Switzerland Comments on the Zero Draft of the Ministerial Outcome Document**

Dear Mr. Laguna-Celis,

We refer to the letter by H.E. Mr. Edgar Gutiérrez, President of the United Nations Environment Assembly and Minister of Environment and Energy of the Republic of Costa Rica, on the Ministerial Outcome Document, dated July 21, 2017 (DM-700-2017). There, Regional Groups are welcomed to provide their comments on the Zero Draft of the Ministerial Outcome Document for UNEA. We would like to bring this letter to the attention of the UNEA President and the representative of Costa Rica in Nairobi.

First, Switzerland believes that the UN Environment Assembly of UNEP must become the single one gravitational center where the member states can provide political guidance on the most pressing environmental issues. Switzerland considers it therefore important to establish a practice of having a ministerial outcome at UNEAs, possibly a ministerial declaration, to allow ministers to take the necessary strategic decisions.

In this regard, we would like to thank the UNEA President for his efforts to achieve a Ministerial Declaration. We appreciate that the Zero Draft generally touches on the key global issues of pollution and we also welcome that the Zero Draft reaches member states way ahead of UNEA-3 in order to allow for structured way forward towards the adoption of the ministerial declaration. Here, we would like to make some general and a few specific comments. We hope that it improves the underlying document and that it will be a valuable basis for preliminary draft of the Ministerial Outcome Document.

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Overall document, cluster and action items

The overall theme of pollution at UNEA 3 is structured in **six areas**, i.e. air, land & soil, marine, chemicals, waste, and freshwater. The resolutions themselves are likely to be clustered following the same criteria. First, throughout the document adjust, target and relate the text always to all six identified areas of pollution, it will create the necessary link to the forthcoming resolutions. Second, add to all six areas **specific action items** that will lead to a toxic-free future.

Overall document, be specific and apply elsewhere,

In the third paragraph you make the important link of pollution to the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**. We believe that it will be a key outcome of UNEA 3 to be showcase how the achieved political decisions on pollution or the ministerial outcome here will be specifically contributing to the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda. It would be hence important to link the actions and elements of the text to a specific in particular pollution related SDGs such as under the SDG's 3, 6, 7, 9 or 14.

Even a greater impact is achieved when highlighting the contributions to the six SDGs that will be under review at the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Developments half a year later in July 2018.

Page 1, fourth paragraph, adjust,

*"Pollution is not new, but with the population expected to reach 10 billion people by 2050, these self-imposed threats have never been greater or more preventable."*

Rather than speaking solely about the quantity of people, it is the sustainable use of natural resources and the concept of the planetary boundaries that should be used as an argument.

Page 2, first paragraph, first bullet point, add and adjust,

*"Supporting the development, collation and use of reliable scientific data. ..."*

We fully support the reference to a strong science basis for policy making, as it also speaks to the one of the core elements of UNEP's mandate. We encourage to refer to the specific processes of Global Environment Outlook GEO and the internationally agreed environmental goals (formerly known as Global Environmental Goals) as the underlying core for the science-policy interface mentioned here.

Page 2, first paragraph, third bullet point, add and adjust,

By talking about cultivating economic productivity we must address the notion of green economy / circular economy and the concept of decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation.

Page 2, first paragraph, fourth bullet point, add and adjust,

*"Nurturing integrated urban development to ... This includes accelerating the sound management of chemicals and waste, ..."*

We believe that the notion of "sound management of chemicals and waste" must not solely apply to the urban environment as it is a greater, overarching concept. It is only mentioned here but should find a place as one of the identified areas of pollution.

Page 2, second paragraph, omit sentence,

*"In the time it has taken you to read this declaration, some 200 people have died from environmentally modifiable factors; nearly half of that just from breathing."*

We believe that by presenting some actionable next steps to tackle pollution and move towards a pollution-free world we give the ministerial declaration a positive spin and encouragement to work together on the issue. By placing such a negative notion at the end

of the ministerial outcome document, you turn important readers outside of the field of environmental policy away.

We are looking forward to fruitful discussions about the Ministerial Outcome Document.

Yours sincerely

Federal Office for the Environment FOEN  
The Head of the International Affairs Division



Franz Perrez  
Ambassador

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