

Ministerial declaration of the 2017 UN Environment Assembly “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet”

Preliminary draft of the ministerial outcome document

Released on 21 September 2017

1. We, the world’s ministers of environment, gathered for the Third Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly to discuss a path towards a pollution-free planet. We welcome the progress that has been achieved by the international community to reduce pollution. We need to drastically accelerate our efforts if we want to secure a pollution-free planet for our ecosystems and our peoples. We commit to working with all stakeholders to rapidly explore and implement every possible solution to beat pollution in all areas, namely, air, land and soil, freshwater and oceans.

2. As the representatives of all countries, we believe that, regardless of age, gender or culture, faith or wealth, no one should die from dirty water or poor hygiene. Yet, nearly 2,000 children below the age of five will do just that every day. No one should choke because they walk down a street or cook a hot meal in their home. Yet every day, 9 out of 10 of us will continue to breathe air that is unsafe and 20,000 people will die because of it. No community should be contaminated by hazardous chemicals and waste. Yes, thousands of children are exposed to dangerous levels of chemicals and wastes where they play, live and go to school. Yet of the thousands of chemicals on the market, only a fraction is properly tested, labelled or tracked. No coastal community should struggle to secure adequate dietary protein from already fragile coastal fisheries. No ecosystem should be so damaged by consumer choices that it ceases to function properly. Yet every year, we dump up to 13 million tonnes of plastic in our oceans and 50 million tonnes of electronic waste on our land.

3. We acknowledge the linkages between pollution, health, climate change, economic growth, biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation. We recognize that tackling pollution will help to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and also note with concern that all forms of conflict, particularly armed, can inflict damage on the environment, often leaving a legacy of pollution that delays recovery and threatens the health of people and ecosystems. No one should be left behind as we strive to deliver the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development or other international frameworks. Yet it is still the poorest and most vulnerable people in society who are disproportionately affected.

4. This Assembly recognizes that everyone on this planet is entitled to live in a clean environment, with safe access to clean water, air and soil. These are the most precious of natural resources. Any threat to them is a threat to our health, our society, our economy, our ecosystems, our security and our very survival. Pollution is not new, but with the global population expected to reach 10 billion people by 2050 - accompanied with a global increase in demand for resources, these self-imposed threats have never been greater.

5. We also acknowledge that determination, collaboration, knowledge generation and sharing, innovation and clean technology can help transform these challenges into opportunities. The transition to a pollution-free planet is not only achievable, but can help tackle poverty, improve health, create decent jobs and drive economic growth, improve life below water and on land, and reduce global warming.

6. We must recapture and reinvest the 300 tonnes of gold buried in electronic waste every year; the billions of dollars in plastic packaging being thrown away; the immense economic loss from exposing children to lead in paint and other sources of lead poisoning; the US\$8.7 billion annual cost of

intelligence quotient loss from exposure to by-products emissions of mercury, and the US\$5 trillion spent on healthcare because of air pollution.

7. Many actors have already taken the lead on this journey and have been very successful at addressing pollution. Governments have adopted targeted multilateral or regional environmental agreements that aim to address pollution in its various aspects and, if effectively implemented, they will help turn the tide on pollution. Solutions to help remove pollutants and detoxify our environment exist around the world. We must dramatically scale up and accelerate the solutions that countries, cities, businesses and individuals are already using to avoid risking further exposure of humans and ecosystems to existing and growing pollution.

8. We acknowledge the magnitude of challenges and opportunities identified in the United Nations Environment Programme Executive Director's Report, *Towards a Pollution-Free Planet*.

9. We commit to preventing, mitigating and managing the pollution of air, land and soil, freshwater and oceans by:

a. Supporting the development, collation and use of reliable scientific data. This includes better multidisciplinary indicators; capacity for efficient data gathering and monitoring; easier access to and wider availability of data and information; and greater transparency and open sharing of data. Promoting evidence-based decision making in the public and private sectors, effective standard setting by all stakeholders and greater participation by individuals from all walks of life.

b. Using such data, especially regarding impacts to human health and economic growth, to prioritize implementation of on-the-ground programs and projects to address pollution with the most benefit / return on investment.

c. Targeting pollutants through environmental agreements and tailored action. First and foremost, by implementing existing multilateral agreements, conventions and regulations to prevent, control and reduce pollution. By developing global policies and programs to prevent, reduce and control pollutants where the science is clear, but actions do not yet exist. And by increasing research on pollutants where the impact is not yet clear.

d. Fostering economic productivity and job creation, while promoting innovation and the uptake and transfer of new clean and environmentally sound technologies. Promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns, making it easier for producers and consumers to rethink, reuse, recycle, recover and remake any products, materials and services.

e. Promoting the adoption of policies and approaches for the sound management of chemicals and waste, including the use of integrated life cycle and value chain approaches and sustainable chemistry, and making best use of policy interlinkages, trade, investment, and innovation opportunities.

f. Working with local governments towards promoting sustainable models of urban development that address, in an integrated manner, cleaner and more liveable cities.

g. Promoting fiscal incentives to stimulate systemic and behavioural changes. This includes understanding and including the true cost of pollution in financial decisions and redirecting investments

from the short-term profits of polluting activities to the more sustainable profits of greener alternatives.

h. Strengthening and enforcing more integrated policies, regulations and laws. This will be achieved by supporting institutions and building capacity; bolstering monitoring and accountability systems; and sharing best practices, standards, policy instruments and tools.

i. Creating and expanding multistakeholder partnerships between governments, the private sector, academia, civil society and individuals. This includes emphasizing the enormous potential of partnerships between different stakeholders. Increased coordination amongst United Nations agencies and bodies is fundamental to target pollution in all its aspects.

10. As ministers of the environment representing national governments, we recognize that we have a special role to play in delivering on these commitments, taking into account the different capacities amongst countries, and the need for greater cooperation at multilateral and bilateral levels through means such as the exchange of experiences, resources, and technologies.

11. The responsibility for combatting pollution does not rest with national governments alone; it is an international endeavour with crucial roles for the private sector, international organizations, bilateral and multilateral donor agencies, civil society, and individuals. We need to prioritize action and resources to prevent and mitigate pollution, and implement solutions, especially where human health is most affected. As just a few of the 7.5 billion people living on planet Earth, we urge our fellow citizens to recognize that everyone of us is responsible for making that happen. And, as mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, partners, sisters and brothers, friends, colleagues, neighbours and communities, we cannot overstate the need to make it happen quickly.

12. We recognize that moving towards a pollution-free planet is a long-term enterprise. We commit ourselves to undertake and scale-up actions agreed in this Assembly and request the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to engage interested stakeholders in establishing a common platform for action on pollution for our consideration at the next session of the Assembly. We also call for a global coalition for a pollution-free planet fully aligned with the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals to inspire action and promote collaboration amongst existing frameworks.

13. We warmly welcome the resolutions adopted at the Third Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly. We applaud the many pledges announced by diverse stakeholders towards reducing pollution in our planet. We take upon ourselves to advocate for the message of this declaration in all relevant fora and to follow up on its implementation at our next session in 2019. This is our commitment to work towards a pollution-free planet.