



30 October 2017

World Animal Net (WAN) welcomes the opportunity to provide input on the Ministerial Outcome Document for the 2017 UN Environment Assembly.

By way of introduction, World Animal Net (WAN) – established in 1997 - is the world's largest network of animal protection societies, with over 3,000 affiliates in more than 100 countries. We provide these societies with research, information, best practice resources, and opportunities to cooperate and collaborate for beneficial policy change.

We have provided below specific suggestions on the draft Ministerial Outcome Document. We recognize that significant changes are unlikely at this juncture. However, we hope that this will be just the start of urgent and concerted work on pollution, given the critical nature of this issue to humans, animals and our planet.

We have some important issues of principle which we feel are vital to the fight against pollution, but which have been either totally omitted from the Outcome Document, or paid passing lip service without being followed by firm actions or commitments. We feel that it is essential for these to be addressed if we are to solve this destruction and degradation of our planet and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Industrial Agriculture

Industrial agriculture and monocultures are damaging our soil, water, air, climate and biodiversity on an unprecedented scale. Agriculture is a leading cause of pollution in many countries, particularly industrial animal agriculture and the crops grown to feed the industry. In 2006, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) described livestock farming as "...one of the most significant contributors to today's most serious environmental problems". Yet despite the magnitude of the problem, which is fueled by high levels of consumption of meat and dairy products, particularly in the Global North, relatively few global and national policies address the environmental effects of animal agriculture, and those that do are grossly inadequate.

A few facts of relevance to pollution:

- **Climate:** Recent research indicates that the contribution of global agriculture, including livestock production and the grains required for this sector, is even higher than the 30% figure previously cited by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).
- **Water:** Agriculture is the single largest user of freshwater on a global basis; the leading contributor to identified water quality impairments in the nation's rivers and streams, lakes, ponds, and reservoirs; and a major cause of degradation of surface and groundwater resources through erosion, chemical runoff, and pollution from other organic and inorganic wastes.
- **Marine Pollution:** Industrial agriculture is a key source of sea and ocean pollution. Eighty percent of marine pollution comes from land-based sources because rivers carry land-based impacts into coastal areas and oceans.
- **Land:** Industrial animal agriculture is a significant contributor to land pollution. Large quantities of synthetic herbicides, insecticides, bactericides, fertilizers and antibiotics are used which contribute to the pollution and degradation of soil and land (as well as water). The UN's own Global Land Outlook Report highlights the urgency of this issue to our planet and future food security, with a third of our land already severely degraded due to grazing and clearing for animal and feed crop production.
- **Air:** Air quality degradation occurs in and around industrial animal production facilities, due to localised releases of toxic gases, odorous substances, particulates, and bioaerosols containing a variety of microorganisms and human pathogens.

It is neither sustainable nor desirable to allow our current agricultural paradigm to continue as an “extractive industry,” with a short-term/high-yield approach that is based on monocultures and heavy chemical applications, polluting and degrading land, air and water.

There is an urgent need to introduce policies and programs that support the development of agro-ecological solutions, move society towards lower levels of meat consumption and increased plant-based foods, away from polluting and unsustainable foods, towards healthier and more environmentally-friendly options, supported by best practice promotion and education and awareness for consumers.

Corporate Control

The current neoliberal climate does not hold businesses responsible for the full economic costs of their production. This allows businesses to take maximum advantage of the “economies of scale” of large monoculture farming without paying a penny for the detrimental environmental and human health impacts this is causing. These businesses then go on to make large profits while destroying our land, water, air, climate and biodiversity.

It is high time that agricultural corporations were held responsible for their environmental impacts. Strong regulatory systems are needed to prevent such impacts, underpinned by the precautionary principle. These should include action to apply disincentives/penalties for any pollution and greenhouse gas impacts which are not prohibited.

Any remaining subsidies for industrial agriculture must be stopped. Traditional farming and agro-ecological methods which are kinder on the environment and natural resources should be promoted and incentivized.

Structural and Systemic Barriers

It is also important to take into account the wider systemic problems underlying this issue. The use of economic growth (measured by GDP) and neoliberal policies have given free rein to agricultural corporations plundering the planet and using valuable natural resources (including water). This needs to be replaced with a new paradigm which prioritizes the wellbeing of humans, nature and animals.

Respect for and Rights of Nature

Our environmental crisis is a reflection of an underlying crisis of human values and attitudes. Environmental Education and [Humane Education](#) programs are needed to restore respect for nature and animals, and to build a spirit of active caring and volunteering to help the planet. WAN’s experience has shown that such programs not only change the hearts and minds of learners, but also filter through into families and communities. This is in line with the UN’s own Harmony with Nature initiative, which needs strengthening and more emphasis given to the rights of nature.

Conclusions

Pollution is not a natural disaster we have to deal with. It is man-made and a consequence of the current materialistic, consumerist, throw-away lifestyle and lack of effective regulation and enforcement. We can only battle pollution by changing our values, our consumption and production patterns, and establishing effective policy and regulatory systems which prevent and disincentivize pollution, and instead incentivize environmentally-friendly alternatives.

UNEA 3 is just a starting point in the battle against pollution. Much more work is needed to tackle this problem effectively, and this is why WAN supports the suggestion for a multi-agency/multi-stakeholder coordinating body to develop a global action plan to significantly reduce, and eventually abolish, all forms of pollution. This body would need to include sub-groups to examine various kinds of pollution, and to

recommend concrete and practical measures, targets, and timetables for the reduction and eventual abolition of pollution.

Please do not hesitate to [contact us](#) for any further information relating to these suggestions.

We look forward to future opportunities for supporting the work of UN Environment and other stakeholders in building a pollution free planet.

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, **animals** 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, **to protect nature and biodiversity into the future.**

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. Yet of the thousands of chemicals on the market, only a fraction is properly **regulated, controlled**, ~~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 **financial, industrial, policy or** 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, climate change, ~~and~~ biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation. We recognize that tackling pollution **is essential to the achievement of** the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, ~~and~~. **We** 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, **animals** 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 **living being** on this planet is entitled to live in a **safe, clean and healthy** 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 society, ~~our economy~~, our ecosystems, our health, our security, **our livelihoods** 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, **roll-out of known solutions**, innovation and clean technologies ~~can~~ help transform these challenges into opportunities. The transition to a pollution-free planet is not only achievable, but can help tackle poverty, **safeguard and** improve health, create decent jobs, ~~and~~ drive **development and** 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; 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 **prevent and** remove pollutants and detoxify our environment exist around the world. We must dramatically scale up and accelerate the solutions that countries, cities, **industries**, businesses and individuals are already using to avoid risking further exposure of humans and ecosystems to existing and **new 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 **experiential and** scientific data. This includes ~~better multidisciplinary indicators~~; capacity for **effective and** efficient data gathering, **use** and monitoring; easier access to and wider availability of data and information; **better multidisciplinary indicators**; and greater transparency and open sharing of data. Promoting evidence-based decision making in the **governmental**, public and private sectors, effective standard setting by all stakeholders and greater participation by individuals from all walks of life.

b. 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 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. **Where the science is incomplete but risks are known, policy measures should reflect the precautionary principle.**

c. ~~Fostering economic productivity and job creation, while~~ **Promoting the innovation, development, and the uptake and transfer of new** clean and environmentally sound technologies, **fostering economic productivity and job creation in sectors which provide solutions to pollution.** 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.

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

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

f. Promoting fiscal incentives to stimulate systemic and behavioural changes. This includes understanding and including the true cost of pollution in **policy and** financial decisions, and redirecting investments from the short-term profits of polluting activities to the more sustainable profits of greener alternatives. **Subsidies must be removed from polluting industries, disincentives/penalties applied for any pollution and greenhouse gas impacts and incentives provided to support green, ecological alternatives.**

g. 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.

h. Creating and expanding multi-stakeholder 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~~ **sharing** 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, civil society, and individuals. As just a few of the 7.5 billion people living on planet Earth, we urge our fellow citizens to recognize that every one 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 an **urgent, but** long-term enterprise. We commit ourselves to undertake and scale-up actions agreed in this Assembly, ~~request~~ **and to support and cooperate with others in the achievement of our common goals. We call upon** the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to **form a multi-agency/multi-stakeholder coordinating body to develop a global action plan to significantly reduce, and eventually abolish, all forms of pollution. This body will establish specific sub-groups on the various kinds of pollution, in order to recommend concrete measures, targets, and timetables for the reduction and eventual abolition of pollution, with progress and way forward for consideration at the next session of the Environment Assembly.**

~~13. 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.~~ **recognise the role of the High Level Political Forum (HLPF), in the follow up and review of the progress on the 2030 Agenda and take it upon ourselves to strengthen the linkages between the themes of this UNEA and the HLPF, ensuring that measures to reduce and abolish pollution are also included in the work of the HLPF and other relevant fora.**

14. 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.