

Fourth Session of the UN Environment Assembly
Innovative Solutions for Environmental Challenges and Sustainable
Consumption and Production

Inputs from the Emirates Environmental Group, Dubai

KEY PRIORITY AREAS WITHIN THE AGREED THEME WHERE WE SHOULD
CONCENTRATE OUR COLLECTIVE INTERVENTIONS TOWARDS THE NEXT
ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY

Environmental key priority areas that UNEA-4 must focus on are:

1. Natural resource scarcity
2. Pollution, including indoor air pollution
3. Energy insecurity
4. Food insecurity
5. Loss of biodiversity
6. Waste
7. Unsustainable consumption and production
8. Anti-microbial resistance
9. Sand and dust storms
10. Environmental degradation and displacement

Along with these, we believe essential economic and policy interventions must be made in the run up to the next Environment Assembly. These include:

1. **Strengthening the Circular Economy:**

A shift towards circular economy provides potential for innovation through the following: utilising regenerative resources, sustainable resources management, resource efficiency, sustainable marketing, waste management, product lifetime maximisation, design for sustainability etc. Thus, a holistic approach of the circular economy enables the implementation of the 2030 Agenda as well as the SDGs.

2. **Sharing economy:**

As the profile of the modern consumer changes, sustainable consumption is made possible due to its main idea of resource sharing. It must also be noted that while the sharing economy can accelerate sustainable consumption, it does not hinder economic growth, making it highly beneficial for economic, social and green growth.

3. **Green business development:**

Green businesses are synonymous with being environmentally and socially responsible; caring for their workers; protecting the communities they operate in. This conscious methodology of working and culture promotes sustainability, while maintaining competitiveness.

4. **Policy harmonization:**

Creating a common set of standards or 'harmonising' across sectors and industries can ensure a platform for innovation, while driving sustainability.

5. **Rallying state and non-state actors:**

The state and non-state actors (NGOs, IGOs, MNCs) are an essential part of global governance and are now picking up the slack on important environmental issues. However, they must be mobilised to upscale their innovation i.e. to come up with creative solutions for the achievement of Sustainable Consumption and Production as well as efficiency in their supply chains.

6. **Knowledge-sharing and capacity building:**

It is important to promote the transfer, dissemination, and diffusion of innovative sustainable solutions through networking, knowledge-sharing and capacity building for a global movement towards sustainability.

7. **Financial policies:**

Adequate financing efforts and various modalities of cooperation must be undertaken in the transition to SCP. The UNEA must highlight the role of fiscal bodies and the financial sector in provide incentives and robust fiscal approaches in their drive to innovation. For example: UNEP's Finance Initiative and the Partnership for Action on Green Economy

POSSIBLE ELEMENTS AND KEY MESSAGES THAT COULD BE USED AS BUILDING BLOCKS FOR THE MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

We believe the following must be included as essential components in the formulation of the Ministerial Declaration:

1. **Principle 10 of Rio Declaration:**

When aiming for innovation in Sustainable Consumption and Production, there must be a mention of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration – "Environmental issues are best handled with participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level.

At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided.”

Thus, people must have access to environmental information for the purpose of knowledge-sharing and policy development – aspects that are key when working towards sustainable development at the local, regional and national levels.

2. **Reduce, Reuse, Recycle:**

The Declaration must speak about innovative and proper methods of disposal as the problem does not lie with the pollutant itself, but with the attitude of those using it. Reduce, Reuse and Recycle is more feasible than complete banning. And more achievable in the long term too.

3. **Knowledge sharing and education:**

The Ministerial Declaration must mention innovative solutions from around the world for a positive outlook as well as knowledge-sharing.

A few examples include:

- Copenhagen’s prioritisation of bikes over cars; and
- Oslo’s no-car zones

A unique reporting system/dashboard can also be developed to share success stories in innovation globally.

4. **Role of the private sector:**

The role of the private sector will be essential in the shift towards SCP. Apart from collaborations and partnerships, the Declaration must also outline significant actions such as waste processing and sustainable purchasing.

5. **Tax policies:**

Income and tax policies that restrict consumption activities can accelerate a shift to SCP and must be a part of the Declaration.

6. **Review and remember:**

The Declaration must review the specific actions that were strategized to address environmental challenges as per major UN assessments including the Global Assessment of Natural Resource Use; The Sixth Global Environmental Outlook Report; the Global Chemical Outlook etc. Paragraph 8 of the Ministerial Declaration from UNEA-3 and its actions must be reviewed too.

7. **Focus on the 3 D's:**

The Declaration must, in detail, highlight the integrated framework of actions: de-carbonise, de-toxify and decouple resource use and change lifestyles

8. **Collaborations and partnerships:**

The Declaration must encourage the need for partnerships between the private sector and civil society in a shift towards SCP.

9. **Land use change:**

According to reports, land use change/development policies can drive sustainable urban development. As data on land use management is sparse, the Declaration can encourage leaders to implement the same in their regions and countries.

10. **The One Planet network:**

The Declaration must highlight the work carried out by the One Planet network – a platform established to implement the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production and SDG 12. Despite the policies and tools set in place by the network, the objectives need to be accelerated to achieve the given goals. The objectives of the One Planet network for the period 2018-2022 are:

- To be recognised as the lead mechanism to support and accelerate the shift to sustainable consumption and production patterns; and
- Become the leading implementation mechanism for Goal 12 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

POSSIBLE ELEMENTS FOR AN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AGAINST POLLUTION, BUILDING ON THE OUTCOMES OF THE THIRD SESSION OF THE ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY

As pollution prevention is a shared responsibility between governments, private sector, civil society and individuals, there are several areas that must be focused on. Some of these include: conservation and use of natural resources, training and education, product life cycles, process changes, purchasing practices etc.

At EEG, we believe the following are the key elements for the formulation of an Implementation Plan against pollution:

1. Environmental Management System:

It is essential to have a robust EMS in place – one that reduces an organisations' environmental impacts, while increasing operating efficiency.

2. Eliminating exposure to lead paint and promoting environmentally sound management of waste lead-acid batteries (Outcome UNEP/EA.3/Res.9):

The Implementation Plan must uphold the decisions undertaken at the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management; the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal; the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint; the Global Partnership on Waste Management.

As no known level of lead exposure is safe, the Plan must uphold resolutions 1/5 and 2/7 pertaining to sound management of chemicals and waste. Developing countries, who may not have the resources – financial, technical and capacity-building – for the sound management of lead must be included in the Implementation Plan.

Stakeholders must also be encouraged to join the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint.

3. Marine Litter and Microplastics (Outcome UNEP/EA.3/Res.7):

The Implementation Plan must reaffirm SDG 14 and corresponding target 14.1: 'to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution' as well as resolution 1/6 – marine plastic debris and microplastics.

The Implementation Plan must urge stakeholders and members to:

- Ban the discharge of microplastics and plastic litter in oceans

- Conduct proper evaluation and have proper data relating to marine litter and microplastics in oceans
- Develop efficient methods of recycling marine litter and microplastics
- Conduct regular clean-ups of the marine environment

4. **Pollution mitigation and control in areas affected by armed conflict or terrorism (Outcome UNEP/EA.3/Res.1):**

The Implementation Plan must uphold the following resolutions: 70/1 – ‘Transforming the world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’ and 47/3 – ‘Protection of the environment in times of armed conflict’.

Unfortunately, it has been established that UNEP must not be involved in conflict resolution or counter terrorism and must act within its own mandate.

The Plan must consist of a gender aspect as young girls and women are adversely affected in areas of armed conflicts and terrorism.

It is also recommended to send assistance to regions affected by armed conflict and terrorism especially for recovery, field-assessment, post-crisis environmental assessment etc.

5. **Environment and Health:**

As per the outcomes of UNEA-3, this Implementation Plan must comprise provisions for proper disposal of chemicals; dump sites and complex pollution mixtures; endocrine disruptors and antimicrobials etc.

6. **Improving air quality:**

The Implementation Plan can recommend the private sector and governments to develop a low/no-emission transport sector. With over 7 million people that die globally due to air pollution, it is an environmental challenge that is an impediment to sustainable development.

A few actions that can be mentioned in the Plan include:

- Strengthen air pollution management
- Internalise air pollution costs
- Create awareness at the local, national and regional levels
- Include short-lived climate pollutants in the plan
- Enforce vehicle emissions and fuel standards

Apart from these, we would also like to see the following in the Implementation Plan: waste issues, products life cycles, chemicals and their disposal, soil pollution, pesticides and fertilisers, water pollution, mainstreaming biodiversity, premature deaths due to non-communicable diseases and the like.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND INITIATIVES AT NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS WITH A MULTIPLYING EFFECT AND IMPACT

At the local, national and regional level, we would like to highlight some of our projects that have had a positive impact in the shift towards Sustainable Consumption and Production:

1. Project Green Call

Summary:

EEG has been collecting mobile phones for recycling since 2009. However, in 2016, it formally initiated Project Green Call to engage its student members to collect and deposit 15 mobile phones each for recycling during a period of one month. Once achieved, these student members are presented with a certificate of participation. In 2017, the Initiative ran on the special date of 17/5/17 – 17/16/17.

EEG was successful in collecting and depositing **35,796** mobile phones for recycling since 2009. EEG also organises several dialogue sessions with schools and private organisations to raise awareness on mobile phone recycling.

In 2017, Project Green Call had the following impacts:

- The mitigation of **0.070 MT of carbon dioxide**;
- Saving of **344 trees**; and
- Saving of **1,461 gallons of gasoline**

2. Environmental Drawing Competition

Summary:

EEG launched the Environmental Drawing Competition in 2004 to encourage young students to think about the world and its environmental concerns. With the planet undergoing acute environmental degradation, it is but imperative that the youth be motivated to recognise issues, express themselves and find solutions, while raising awareness about the same.

In 2018, we have been able to impact over 65,000 students in the age group of 6-8, 9-11 and 12-16 including students with disabilities by raising awareness, providing them with a suitable platform, and awarding them for making the effort to be involved in environmental issues that really matter.

3. CleanUp UAE

Summary:

Over the last 15 years, EEG has conducted the Clean UP UAE Campaign as a functional tool in promoting environmental protection campaigns nationally. EEG has utilised this concept strategically to create mass campaigns built on local practice, whilst targeting some of the local issues (water, waste and land pollution). The uniqueness of the Campaign lies in bringing together a spectrum of government organisations, private sector organisations, NGOs, academic institutions and the community at large.

A big impact of the Clean Up UAE campaign is that it is graced by volunteers from all walks of life – from high profile officials to CEOs, from laborers to municipality workers, and from families to individuals – who have the belief that they have the power make a difference. And what a difference they made in 2017 – the 125,000-odd volunteers of the campaign were successful in creating history as they collected 110,000 tonnes of general waste, which was segregated and a big portion of it was then sent for recycling.

Initiative at the National Level:

1. UAE Vision 2021:

As part of the UAE Vision 2021, the government is working towards sustainable development, while achieving the perfect synergy between social and economic development.

The focus of this agenda will be:

- Improving air quality;
- Preservation of water resources;
- Accelerating the contribution of clean energy; and
- Establishment of green growth plans

International Initiatives:

1. The Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE):

A grassroots organisation that drives forward the 2030 Agenda through economic policy. It has worked in countries including: South Africa, Barbados, Peru, China, Mauritius, Senegal and many more. Its main features include:

- Reframing economic policies;
- Fostering economic growth; and
- Creating income and jobs