



**Ministerial Joint Regional Vision on
“Innovative Solutions to Pollution”**

Ministerial Conference “Innovative Solutions to Pollution in South East and Southern Europe”

- 1. We, the Environment Ministers and high representatives gathered on the occasion of the Ministerial Conference on “Innovative Solutions to Pollution in South East and Southern Europe”, jointly organised in Belgrade, Serbia on 4 December 2018 with the support of the United Nations Environment Programme to discuss pollution in the region and explore innovative solutions to address it.**
- 2. We acknowledge** the participation of heads and senior officials of International Organizations and representatives of development agencies, civil society, the private sector, academia and other relevant stakeholders.
- 3. We reaffirm** our commitment to the Rio Principles on Environment and Development and to the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, and the need to promote innovative environmental solutions and approaches to accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- 4. We acknowledge** that a healthy and clean environment will help ensure inclusive growth, social security, sustainable development of our economies, and wellbeing of the present and future generations.
- 5. We further acknowledge** the adverse impacts of pollution on air, water, biodiversity loss, climate change and ecosystem degradation.
- 6. We recognize** the recurring environmental emergencies, and that air, soil and water pollution is causing severe environmental damages threatening the safety, security, and sustainable development of countries and is having severe impacts on human health.
- 7. We recognize** that pollution has a transboundary impact at regional and global levels, and that all countries share common risks and similar challenges in the areas of pollution prevention, monitoring and reduction.
- 8. We acknowledge** that anthropogenic pressure on natural resources jeopardise the carrying capacity of ecosystems upon which we all depend represents a threat to the wellbeing of our communities and cities, and to our prosperity and sustainable development. The sustainable management of natural resources and the promotion of sustainable consumption and production patterns is of paramount importance for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the achievement of the Paris Agreement goals, at



the regional level, by promoting a resource efficient, low-emissions and competitive circular economy.

9. **We acknowledge** that achieving sustainable consumption and production is essential to move economy away from highly-resources depleting systems with high emissions, pollution and waste generation, and represents an important challenge as well as an opportunity for our societies.
10. **We recognize** that the development and strengthening of regional partnerships in the fields of pollution prevention, monitoring and reduction will strengthen national capacities in terms of technology development, capacity-building and experience sharing, and promote technology transfer throughout the region. We should involve the public and private sector, and all relevant stakeholders and citizens to participate in partnerships which can foster innovation, innovative financing and disseminate good practices.
11. **We further recognize** the relevance of Environmental Education, Education for Sustainable Development and the importance of supporting innovative approaches and methods addressing pollution prevention, monitoring and reduction in the region which represents a unique opportunity for creating a more inclusive society and reducing inequalities.
12. **We welcome** the theme of the Fourth Session of the UN Environment Assembly, which will be held in Nairobi from 11 to 15 March 2019 under the theme of “Innovative Solutions to Environmental Challenges and Sustainable Consumption and Production” and commend the efforts of the President of the Assembly to develop a focused Ministerial Declaration which builds on the Ministerial Declaration of the third session, entitled “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet”.
13. Therefore, we are determined to support the development and dissemination of innovative solutions in the fields of pollution prevention, monitoring and reduction, and will strengthen the regional voice of the environment *inter alia* by taking the following actions:
 - a. **We will encourage** the establishment and strengthening of regional partnerships, between Governments and stakeholders including the private sector, non-governmental organisations, intergovernmental organisations and the scientific community to promote exchange of experiences, transfer of clean technology and accessible use of best available techniques in the fields of pollution prevention, monitoring, mitigation and management.
 - b. **We will support** environmental policy interventions at all levels, by integrating already existing policy instruments and creating new policies and tools addressing pollution and supporting inter-ministerial cooperation for improved policy coherence.



- c. **We will foster** the development of innovative solutions addressing pollution, replicable throughout the region, supporting green and environmentally sound technologies also promoting the sustainable use of natural capital, research and development, including ecosystem-based solutions to tackle pollution, and the use of data and results of monitoring to understand environmental problems and enhance sustainable development and preserve ecosystems while supporting sustainable livelihoods.
- d. **We will promote** circular economy by supporting sustainable consumption and production patterns in the region, encouraging sustainable lifestyles and making it easier to reduce the use of, reuse and recycle materials thereby contributing to minimized waste generation and disposal.
- e. **We will encourage** sustainable and innovative financing schemes, and private sector-led actions, incentivizing and re-directing public and private investment from all sources toward sustainable solutions and investments toward non-polluting activities.
- f. **We will improve** availability of, and access to relevant environmental data and information on pollution, with a primary focus on conservation, restoration and sustainable use of nature protected areas and all types of forests.
- g. **We will enhance** regional cooperation in addressing transboundary pollution within the existing bilateral, regional or multilateral frameworks as well as by setting-up new partnerships as required.
- h. **We will accelerate** the implementation and promote cooperation in the framework of multilateral environmental agreements aiming at prevention, control and reduction of pollution, e.g. support the ratification processes of the Minamata Convention on Mercury.
- i. **We will support** waste prevention, reuse, recycling and resource recovery to minimize environmental impacts, reduce costs and increase green jobs in the transition to circular economy taking into account polluter pays principle.
- j. **We will support** the creation of public-private partnerships in the field of pollution prevention, monitoring and reduction.
- k. **We will support** significant reduction of all type of marine litter (beach, floating, seafloor and microplastics), including achievement of reductions target for beach marine litter of 20% by 2024.
- l. **We will increase** regional and national awareness on pollution sources, impacts, and solutions and enhance education and capacity building at all levels.



- m. **We will enhance and promote** cooperation with and among local authorities to support the development of innovative strategies and plans addressing pollution in urban areas.
 - n. **We will strengthen** our engagement with the United Nations Environment Assembly to increase its impact and to ensure that national and regional perspectives are taken into consideration.
14. As Ministers of the Environment, **we realize** that supporting pollution prevention, monitoring and reduction initiatives in the region is a long-term endeavour.
15. **We reaffirm** our support to the commitments and resolutions adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly and call for their adequate and coherent implementation.
16. Building on the ongoing consultations on an Implementation Plan of the Ministerial Declaration “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet”, we request the United Nations Environment Programme to:
- a) **Support** Western Balkan countries’ capacities in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sustainable Development Goals and assist in meeting obligations under respective multilateral environmental agreements.
 - b) **Establish** a United Nations Environment Programme sub-regional presence for facilitating exchange of information and creation of partnerships to increase synergies of ongoing projects and furthermore implement national policies in the fields of environmental protection and sustainable development.
 - d) **Increase** support to Western Balkans countries and facilitate access to innovative partnerships to enhance efforts to implement policies, legislations and programmes.
17. **We thank** the Government of Serbia for hosting the Conference and appreciate the role of Italy and Serbia in launching and supporting the process.