



**Fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-4)
(Nairobi, 11-15 March 2019)**

***Opening Statement at UNEA 4
11th March 2019***

Mr. President,

Excellences,

Distinguished colleagues,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. Bosnia Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

We are saddened by the tragic circumstances that affect this meeting. We express our deepest condolences for those who lost their lives in yesterday's tragic event and our thoughts and prayers are with their families, friends and colleagues. Many of them were on their way to this meeting wanting to make a difference and adding their voices to our call for urgent action in the face of today's pressing environmental challenges. Their absence increases our responsibility to make this meeting a success.

This session of the United Nations Environment Assembly represents our opportunity to boost the political will and efforts in order to solve the sustainability crises and move towards establishing the reference values for a sustainable use of our natural resources.

We would like to congratulate the UNEA President and the Acting Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme for their contributions on preparing this fourth session of the Assembly and assure them that the EU will work constructively to enable this assembly to live up to its mandate

provide global Environment leadership, to work on innovative solutions to address environmental challenges and Sustainable Consumption and Production.

We appreciate the draft document and we support the UNEA President in his efforts to preserve a level of ambition that meets the urgent need to address specific areas. In that light, we would like to continue the consultations with the Member States to work towards an ambitious outcome that recognizes among others the urgency, underlined by the best available science, to enhance ambition to address climate change and effectively address plastics.

We welcome the very constructive consultations at the fourth Open Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives. Looking at the results of the OECPR, we will work constructively during this week's negotiations at UNEA4 to reach agreement on many if not all of resolutions, in our efforts to build a better future.

To get there, we still face a number of challenges. The Climate and Biodiversity crises we face make it essential and urgent to step up global action against all forms of deforestation and to give UNEP the mandate to contribute with its expertise. We would also like to emphasize the interlinkages between Sustainable Consumption and Production, resource management and the elements of our environment - climate, air, biodiversity, water and land use. The European Union and its Member States recognize the imperative to place sustainable resource management in the center of our relevant policies.

We wish to voice our strong support for the resolution on women and the environment which promotes gender equality and the human rights and empowerment of all women and girls in environmental governance.

We wish to facilitate environment ministers' discussion on *Natural resource use: towards a Safe Operating Space*. We invite all ministers and heads of delegations to a breakfast on Friday 15 March 2019, at 8.00 am to discuss about how can use our natural resources in a safe operating space for humanity and how we can boost the political will, establishing targets and reference values for a sustainable level of use of natural resources.

We believe that the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and other multilateral environmental agreement objectives cannot be achieved without the sustainable management and use of natural resources, through greater resource efficiency and by moving towards a circular economy.

Dear colleagues,

The draft Ministerial Outcome Document has been developed based in the spirit of consensus after in-depth consultations and negotiations to accommodate all concerns, while maintaining the action-oriented nature of the document. We hope that the further work during this week may allow us to make further improvements to an outcome document that provides valuable guidance for all Member States and stakeholders on innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production. We still believe that UNEA should recognize the urgency, underlined by the best available science, to enhance ambition to address climate change.

The EU wants this meeting to be a success. As Environment Ministers we have to use this opportunity and show leadership to communicate a clear and ambitious political message from this global meeting to the High-level Political Forum and to the wider global public. This message is clear: We must shift our global economic systems towards greater sustainability and circularity and catalyze the global and concrete action to achieve this shift as a matter of urgency.

Thank you.