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**United Nations
Environment Assembly of the
United Nations Environment
Programme**

**First special session: commemoration of the
fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the
United Nations Environment Programme**
Nairobi (hybrid), 3 and 4 March 2022

**Political declaration of the special session of the United Nations
Environment Assembly to commemorate the fiftieth
anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations
Environment Programme**

We, Heads of State and Government, ministers and high-level representatives, having gathered, together with the representatives of international organizations and other stakeholders, at the special session of the United Nations Environment Assembly entitled “UNEP@50: Strengthening UNEP for the implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme,

Expressing our gratitude to the Government of Kenya for hosting the special session – a historic milestone for the global community and the United Nations Environment Programme – to reflect on achievements and lessons learned and envisage future ambitions and actions to support the implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development,

Acknowledging with appreciation the 50-year contribution of the United Nations Environment Programme in supporting a worldwide effort to overcome the planet’s biggest environmental challenges,

Recognizing that a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is important for the enjoyment of human rights, taking note of Human Rights Council resolution 48/13 entitled “The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment”, and noting that the General Assembly has been invited to consider the matter,

Recalling the Stockholm Declaration and the Stockholm Plan of Action for the Human Environment, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Rio+20 Declaration entitled “The future we want” and in particular paragraph 88 thereof, General Assembly resolution 69/313 of 27 July 2015 entitled “Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development”, General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015 entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, General Assembly resolution 73/333 of 30 August 2019 entitled “Follow-up to the report of the ad hoc open-ended working group established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/277” and General Assembly resolution 76/208 of 17 December 2021 entitled “Report of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme”, as well as the outcomes of all the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and environmental fields,

Recognizing the urgent need and our common objectives to reinforce and advance the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of the environment for present and future generations, as it is crucial to urgently reverse the current trends of environmental decline, which are impeding progress towards sustainable development, while recognizing differing national circumstances,

Reaffirming that eradicating poverty, changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production and promoting sustainable ones, and protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development are the overarching objectives of, and essential requirements for, sustainable development, while stressing that poverty eradication remains the greatest challenge facing the world today,

Recognizing the importance of fostering environmental rule of law and effective international environmental governance through multilateral processes, and conscious of ongoing initiatives to promote coordinated approaches and complementary actions for addressing biodiversity loss, climate change, desertification and land degradation, as well as pollution and unsound management of chemicals and waste,

Recognizing also the crucial importance of effective domestic legal frameworks and governance structures for promoting compliance with obligations under international environmental law, and of the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals, while acknowledging the importance of international cooperation in this regard,

1. *Reaffirm* all the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and, recognizing that we face different challenges, we will strengthen our international cooperation towards the environmental dimension of sustainable development;
2. *Support* the strengthening of international environmental governance in the context of the institutional framework for sustainable development, and promote enhanced coordination within the United Nations system for balanced integration of the environmental, economic and social dimensions of sustainable development;
3. *Commit ourselves* to mainstreaming, in a balanced manner, the environmental dimension of sustainable development into national policies, strategies and planning, including but not limited to supporting building of the capacity of relevant authorities, taking into account national circumstances, in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
4. *Call* for renewed efforts at all levels to enhance implementation of existing obligations and commitments under international environmental law, and to keep the ambition regarding environmental protection and means of implementation, including through global partnerships and enabling a sustainable future for our planet and addressing urgent social, economic and environmental challenges, also considering the backdrop of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its disproportionate impact on the poorest and people in vulnerable situations by ensuring an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable recovery, including by building back better and greener;
5. *Affirm* the indispensable role of the United Nations Environment Assembly within the United Nations system as the intergovernmental decision-making body with universal membership, while respecting the independence and respective mandates of multilateral environmental agreements, for enhancing progress in the comprehensive implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development within the United Nations system, providing overarching policy guidance, and strengthening international environmental governance and implementation of the global environmental agenda in line with the document “The Future We Want”;
6. *Reaffirm* the role of the United Nations Environment Programme as the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system, and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment, and support continuous strengthening of intergovernmental oversight and the accountability of the secretariat of the United Nations Environment Programme in the implementation of the Programme’s mandate in line with Governing Council decision 27/2;
7. *Renew* our support for strengthening the collaboration and cooperation between multilateral environmental agreements and the United Nations Environment Programme while respecting their independence and respective mandates, with a view to achieving progressive improvement in the state of the global environment, as well as in the provision of the means of implementation, and, to that end, invite the governing bodies of multilateral environmental agreements

to collaborate with the United Nations Environment Assembly, as appropriate, to promote policy coherence and its effective implementation;

8. *Support* the strengthening of the United Nations Environment Programme and its regional presence, underline the importance of universal membership to the United Nations Environment Programme, and invite all Member States and members of specialized agencies that have not yet done so to become accredited to the United Nations Environment Programme, and, in that regard, take note with interest of the adoption of General Assembly resolution 76/246 and underline the need to continue improving the United Nations Office at Nairobi, as the only United Nations headquarters duty station in the global South and the host of the headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme, and, furthermore, invite the United Nations Office at Nairobi to provide more competitive services while inviting the governing bodies of all the multilateral environmental agreements, in particular those hosted by the United Nations Environment Programme, to consider convening, within their mandates, their meetings more frequently in Nairobi;

9. *Stress* the importance of advancing equitable geographic distribution and gender parity among the staff of the secretariat of the United Nations Environment Programme, particularly with regard to Professional and senior-level positions, and request the Executive Director of the Programme to continue ongoing efforts and take effective action in this regard and continue to report regularly to the Committee of Permanent Representatives on progress achieved;

10. *Invite* the General Assembly to consider, as appropriate, the level of regular-budget funding required to help the United Nations Environment Programme to fulfil its mandate, taking into account the Programme's approved work programme and General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII);

11. *Reaffirm* that all Member States and members of specialized agencies, taking into account their economic and social circumstances, should contribute financially to the United Nations Environment Programme; in this regard, urge Member States and others in a position to do so to support the United Nations Environment Programme through more stable, adequate and predictable core contributions to the Environment Fund, with due consideration for the voluntary indicative scale of contributions, and stress the need for the United Nations Environment Programme to manage its financial resources prudently and diversify its donor base by encouraging Member States that do not regularly contribute to the Environment Fund to do so;

12. *Encourage* the United Nations Environment Programme, as chair of the Environment Management Group, in collaboration with the other members of the Group, to continue to strengthen system-wide inter-agency coordination on the environment and to call for active involvement and support from all members of the Group in the implementation of system-wide strategies on the environment;

13. *Support* the key role of the United Nations Environment Programme in promoting and strengthening the science-policy interface in order to support intergovernmental debate, negotiations and deliberations, and policy decisions relating to international environmental law and governance, promote the identification and sharing of the best available science to support effective environmental action and policymaking, and in cooperation and collaboration between the relevant scientific panels and to encourage geographical and gender balance in the membership of such panels, and commit ourselves to investing further in environmental research, including in assessments by the United Nations Environment Programme, and making more effective use of knowledge generated by the scientific community;

14. *Recognize* the importance of access to information, access to public participation in decision-making processes and access to justice in environmental matters, and invite Member States and members of specialized agencies to disseminate and share evidence-based environmental information and raise public awareness regarding critical, persistent and emerging environmental issues and continue to support the United Nations Environment Programme in developing a global environmental data strategy;

15. *Resolve* to continuously strengthen, where needed, environmental laws, policies and regulatory frameworks at the national, regional and global levels, without reducing the existing levels of environmental protection, and to strengthen capacity across all sectors for the effective implementation of international environmental law by closing knowledge gaps, enhancing cross-sectoral coordination, improving monitoring and law enforcement, increasing political will and engaging stakeholders, in accordance with national legal systems, while acknowledging the importance of international cooperation in supporting and complementing national action;

16. *Invite* Member States and members of specialized agencies to increase their support to the Fifth Montevideo Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law

(Montevideo Programme V), and to promote the development and implementation of environmental rule of law and welcome the ongoing discussions on this matter while strengthening the capacity of Member States and members of specialized agencies, upon their request;

17. *Encourage* Member States and members of specialized agencies that have not yet done so to consider ratifying relevant multilateral environmental agreements and to effectively implement them, including through the incorporation of their provisions into national legal systems as appropriate;

18. *Invite* Member States and members of specialized agencies to address relevant principles of international environmental law in their domestic legal systems, as appropriate, noting, in this context, the ongoing work by the International Law Commission on general principles of law;

19. *Commit ourselves* to cooperating to strengthen capacity across all sectors for the effective implementation of international environmental law, including in the administrative and justice sectors, in accordance with domestic legal systems, while acknowledging the importance of international cooperation and support in this regard;

20. *Call upon* Member States and members of specialized agencies to enhance the provision and mobilization of all types and sources of means of implementation, including capacity-building, technology and financial support, and to promote global partnerships and North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation, in order to support developing countries in the implementation of national environmental policies in the areas in which they require it, and complementing their national efforts, consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development;

21. *Call for* the urgent fulfilment of existing financial commitments under various multilateral environmental agreements to assist developing countries, and stress the importance of fulfilling relevant pledges;

22. *Commit ourselves* to further amplifying the mobilization of domestic financial resources, including through enhanced collaboration with the private sector, to advance the holistic and balanced implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development, taking into consideration the need of developing countries for enhanced international cooperation and support to complement their efforts to mobilize domestic resources;

23. *Invite* the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to identify further options, in line with the Programme's medium-term strategy and programme of work, for providing assistance to Member States and members of specialized agencies upon their request, including through United Nations country teams, to improve implementation of their environmental objectives, international environmental law and the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the national level, including access to scientific information, technologies, technical assistance and financial resources, while ensuring complementarity with the work of treaty bodies;

24. *Call on* the United Nations, within its mandate, to facilitate effective and efficient use of and adequate and timely access to existing financial instruments, including to support access by Member States and members of specialized agencies to capacity-building and technology, with a special focus on the needs of developing countries, and call on Member States and members of specialized agencies to make effective and efficient use of existing financial mechanisms and funds for the purpose of implementing international environmental law and improving the status of the global environment in promoting environmentally, economically and socially sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic;

25. *Encourage* the active and meaningful engagement of all relevant stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and local communities and strengthen the ability of major groups and stakeholders to participate in meetings and activities of the United Nations Environment Programme in line with applicable rules and procedures in a geographically and gender-balanced manner, and commit ourselves to continuing to explore new ways of promoting transparency and the effective engagement of civil society, including via digital means;

26. *Take note* of the report "The UNEP We Want" prepared by major groups and stakeholders, which provides proposals towards a more inclusive and impactful United Nations Environment Programme.