

Statement of State Secretary of the Ministry of Environments of the Slovak Republic Mr. Michal Kiča, delivered on behalf of the Slovak Environment Minister Ján Budaj during Joint Meeting of the UNEP CPR Bureau and Bureau of the UNEA6.

Dear colleagues,

Allow me, as the Vice-Chair of UNEA 6 and member of the UNEA 6 Bureau, to present my idea of what should be the focus of the upcoming UNEA meeting and what should be its theme.

Due to the complicated situation in the Eastern European Regional Group, that did not allow for consultation on the theme within it, I am hereby presenting the theme in a national capacity.

- we welcome the adoption by the UN General Assembly in July 2022 of a historic resolution declaring the universal human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, while encouraging international organisations and the private sector to strengthen the climate action;
- I thank the UNEP Secretariat for preparing a document with three draft themes where at least one reflects this universal right;
- I thank the UNEP Secretariat for providing appropriate justifications for the choice of the themes and for placing them in the context of global environmental issues;
- The International Criminal Court (ICC) has mostly adjudicated cases of genocide and war crimes since its establishment in 2002.
- In 2016, it stated that **it would consider crimes against humanity in a broader context**. It said it would also consider crimes leading to the "destruction of the environment", "excessive exploitation of natural resources" and "unlawful expropriation and occupation of land" under this category;
- However, no tool has yet been developed to define and address intentional environmental crimes during peacetime;
- as a member of the Eastern European Group, I have witnessed first-hand the environmental damage in the region, due to the ongoing Russian aggression in Ukraine;
- the bombs used contain many chemicals; the factories and other infrastructure damaged leak many more chemicals and heavy metals into the air, soil, surface and groundwater; in case of a nuclear power plant being hit, there is a risk of contamination of the area for decades, even centuries;
- **migration also has vast environmental impacts**. If a quarter of the population moves from one country to neighbouring countries, occurring within a very short period of time, this is a burden on infrastructure, burden on the soil, increasing water consumption, increasing waste water, polluting the air, increasing the amount of waste, increasing the number of incoming cars into countries that do not meet EU emission standards, etc.;
- **but let us not only concentrate on the war, there is also a major impact on the environment from major infrastructure projects** that do not propose to compensate for

the environment where it has been taken from it, but also from individual activities that damage the environment;

- **Dear colleagues, the environment knows no boundaries! Environmental damage in one country has an impact on all others.** Exposed to risk are river flows, the air and, in the event of an explosion of critical infrastructure that may cause radiation pollution, the safety and population health are also at risk;
- **I hereby appeal for the universality of the proposed theme, not only from the point of view of the current aggression of the Russian Federation in Ukraine and from the point of view of environmental damage during wartime, but also from the viewpoint of environmental damage in peacetime;**
- **I am aware of the fact that we are not the only region facing a similar situation. The need to create an instrument to protect the environment in peacetime and during wartime is universal. What I am describing has happened and continues to occur everywhere in the world, and if we do not try to correct it, it will continue to happen;**
- Hereby, I would like to appeal for us to include in one of the themes **the environment protection by means of international law both in peacetime and during wartime**
- *From this view, we propose the following addition to the wording of theme No. 2:*

Safe environment for all: Towards the implementation of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment through legally binding instruments.