

Excellencies,

Dear Co Chairs, Members and Observers of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee,

Dear Partners at the United Nations Environment Programme,

Dear Major Groups and Stakeholders,

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, as the Director of the Hassan II International Center for Environmental Training, academic arm of the Mohammed VI Foundation for Environmental Protection, chaired by **Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Hasnaa**, I would like to welcome you in Morocco and at the Center for today and tomorrow's important meeting of the Major Groups and Stakeholders.

For some of you like my sister Djatougbe and my brothers David and Isaiah, it is not the first time here. Gyubin and Zuhair have been here since yesterday and again I would like to thank the Children and Youth Major Group to UNEP for the partnership for the youth consultations that took place yesterday and that, I believe, went very well.

I would like to thank UNEP, and in particular Ulf, Isaiah, Laetitia and Aurora, for the brilliant partnership in making today's and tomorrow's meetings a reality.

Over the course of one day and a half, we will have no less than 8 sessions, including several group sessions to consider a range of issues such as the Regional Consultative Meetings, the Progress on UNEA 5 resolutions, the Joint Meeting of the UNEA and CPR Bureaus and the draft ministerial declaration for UNEA 6.

That's what the agenda says and, under the leadership of the Major Groups Facilitating Committee and with the contributions from all of you, that is what will happen.

Beyond the agenda however, it is about reconnecting and fostering the spirit of community that unites us.

Indeed, the Major Groups and Stakeholders are very much a community of communities.

Behind each and every one of you, supporting you, inspiring you and making you accountable, is a community.

As a matter of fact, I would like all of us to remember the words of Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Muta Maathai who once said "I'm very conscious of the fact that you can't do it alone. It's teamwork. When you do it alone you run the risk that when you are no longer there nobody else will do it."

Ingrid, Mohammed, Duncan, Dominic, Gyubin, Zuhair, Paul, Arthur, Wali, Lena, Rodion, Jean-Baptiste, Magash, Djatougbe, Christopher, Stephen, Frezer, Dalia, Rhoda, Bert, David, Saro, Ajay, Patrizia, Ida, Mauro, Yarivith, Jennifer, Celeste, Dan, Anne, Faisal & Wjidan. Whether you are present here in person or connected online, thank you for your leadership. Thank you for your commitment. Thank you for making a difference through partnerships, for people, planet, peace and prosperity. Thank you for being part of the team.

Not everyone present here is an accredited UNEP entity, we also believed that today's meeting would be an important opportunity to reach out and help build connections and capacities for the

environment and sustainable development. Evidently, any decision making that may take place will only be reserved for UNEP accredited entities.

At the Foundation, under the leadership of **Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Hasnaa**, we are also all about communities and some of them are present here today.

It is through our community of Partners that we implement programs such as Eco Schools, Young Reporters for the Environment, Global Schools, the African Green Universities and Youth Education Network that we launched in partnership with UNEP, and the Blue Flag, Clean Beaches, the Safeguarding and Development of the Marrakech Palm Grove, the African Youth Climate Hub, Voluntary Carbon Offsetting Activities, Air Quality and Health as well as Climate Finance trainings. We have developed and continue to develop a series of pedagogical tools in support of all these endeavors.

For all these activities and more, we would be happy to explore collaborations. If you have any questions, feel free to pull me aside for a chat over the course of today and tomorrow. My colleagues will be very happy to engage with you as well.

In concluding, I would like to thank in particular Maroua and Isaiah for having played such a central role in making this meeting a reality as well as the MGFC and more specifically the agenda task force for their counsel and support.

Thank you very much for your attention.