

Asia Pacific Group Statement
by H.E. Mr. Hazem Shabat, Ambassador and Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine,
Chair of the Asia Pacific Group

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Your Excellency, Madame Leila Benali, Minister of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development of the Kingdom of Morocco and President of the sixth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-6),

Madame Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UNEP,

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Asia Pacific Group.

The Group would like to congratulate you, Madam President, the Government of the Republic of Kenya, and the Secretariat for the successful organization of the Assembly. The Group looks forward to the positive outcome of this UNEA.

Madame President,

The Asia Pacific Group is composed of countries with vastly different contexts, including but not limited to Small Island Developing States, Least Developed Countries, archipelagic states, developing economies, and industrialized countries. It is a region strongly affected by the various ramifications of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, among other environmental challenges, as it surges forward to bring development to its population.

Regrettably, our region also continues to face conflicts and disasters. Recent unfortunate events have undoubtedly hampered the advancement of environmental initiatives at national, sub-regional, and regional levels, consequently impeding global efforts towards realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

With its diversity, complexity, and challenges, the Asia-Pacific Group fully understands the urgency and need for effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral actions on the environment, if sustainable development and a healthy planet are to be achieved and it has worked with determination in this regard. It is also cognizant of how one environmental challenge can contribute to the other and the need for more integrated and synergistic multilateral actions to address them.

Madame President,

The Member States of the Asia Pacific Group have taken numerous steps and actions towards the achievement of the development agenda, including the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, obligations under the Multilateral Environmental Agreements and the resolutions and decisions of UNEAs. It has worked actively in the preparations to contribute to meaningful outcomes of this UNEA.

We thank the Government of Sri Lanka for its organization of the Fifth Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific in Colombo in 2023.

The APG also welcomes the convening of the International Conference on Combating Sand and Dust Storms in Tehran in September 2023

We also thank The Sultanate of Oman for hosting in 2023 the thirty-fourth session of the Council of the Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE), alongside the second session of the Arab Forum for Environment (AFEN) on and the Regional Consultation of West Asia Major Groups and Stakeholders.

These forums in collaboration with UNEP, and UNEP's Regional Offices of the Asia and Pacific and West Asia contributed to a better understanding of the region's needs and expectations, leading to UNEA 6, and fostered a spirit of closer collaboration to address the various environmental challenges in the region.

Additionally, we extend our gratitude to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which will graciously host this year the 35th session of CAMRE, the third session of the Arab Forum for Environment and,

notably, the 51st World Environment Day celebrations on 5 June, 2024 and COP16 of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification 2nd – 13th of December 2024 in Riyadh.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Leading up to this UNEA, the APG notes the consultations done on the Ministerial Declaration but expresses its concern that the draft final document does not duly reflect important concerns and issues raised by member states and, as such, it does not enjoy the consensus.

Having spent the past week in negotiations, the Asia Pacific Group hopes that the resolutions proposed by its members would be favorably considered and endorsed. We believe that the issues covered are urgent for the health of the planet as they aim to halt land degradation, combat sand and dust storms, contemplate climate justice, establish synergistic approaches to tackle the multiple environment crises, and promote sustainable lifestyles for the environment.

As other key priorities of the region, the Group wishes to highlight the importance of the following:

- Ensuring the health of the oceans and seas for the planet's health;
- Scaling up climate action including adaptation strategies;
- Scaling up action to address biodiversity loss, including through the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, benefit sharing for genetic resources and strengthening technologies and facilities;
- Continued engagement on reducing pollution, including through the INC-Plastics Pollution process, and
- Meaningful engagement with all stakeholders in the decision-making processes on environment.

It is important, however, to remember that these actions can be more effectively implemented with the provision of adequate financing for developing countries combined with capacity development.

Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

The APG believes that a multitude of opportunities remain to scale up effective, inclusive, and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. The Asia Pacific Group stands ready to contribute positively and actively in the UNEA process.

Thank you, Madame President.