

Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions

Introductory remarks on the occasion of the opening of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements Day at the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

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Conference Room 1

President of UNEA,
Executive Director of UNEP,
Excellencies and
Distinguished delegates,

I am deeply honored to provide some remarks at the opening of this historical MEAs Day of UNEA-6.

I am delighted to speak also on behalf of Monika Stankiewicz, my dear colleague Executive Secretary of the Minamata Convention. Together we are pleased to bring to you the perspective of the chemicals and waste thematic clusters of MEAs.

Today represents an unprecedented milestone for all of us in our journey to find effective, inclusive, mutually reinforcing and sustainable multilateral solutions to address the triple planetary crisis that humanity is facing. Thank you Inger for your leadership.

If the science is unclear to some, the observed evidence is however, overwhelming. 2023 was the hottest year on record and CO2 levels now exceeding 420 ppm, almost 100 ppm more since I was born. A third of food, or 1.3 billion tons, intended for human consumption goes to waste, while 202 million of young children are suffering from severe food poverty. Population sizes of all wildlife has declined by 68% since I was born, with hundreds becoming extinct. Since I was born, the amount of plastics has increased from a mere 2 million tons per year to more than

450 million tons today, with almost 14 million tons in the oceans. I could go on, but I will run out time. Last one – WHO estimates that over 7 million people die for air pollution every year, and wait for this – 9 out of 10 people are breathing some toxic emissions from the products we use, wear and have in our homes. Lastly, more than 45 % of countries on our planet are still dependent on highly hazardous pesticides for maintaining food security, doesn't that present an opportunity for innovation by industry?

I think, we all agree, we need a paradigm shift. Yes, voluntary efforts are commendable, but not sufficient. We need clear action and clear targets in a manner that is fair and affordable to all. To clean up the planet we need all parties on the table, all considerations, all cooperation and all commitments.

On the pollution front, much progress has been achieved, but we need to increase our efforts to break down those inevitable legacy of silos and polarization. The triple planetary crisis is actually one planetary crisis, hence multilateralism should be tuned to enhance cooperation among member states, international organizations, civil society and the private sector. Member states, your leadership, policies and sound governance are needed, international organisations your comparative strengths and expertise are needed, civil society your advocacy, keeping us accountable are needed, and the private sector your innovations and capital are needed.

The BRS Conventions and the Minamata Convention have undertaken numerous initiatives to enhance cooperation with other MEAs, such as the CBD and the UNFCCC, and are heavily engaged in supporting the development of the new international treaty on plastics and the science policy panel and the implementation of the Global Framework on Chemicals. We also deliver at the regional and national levels through our UN partners and also a network of regional centers, and cooperation with the Regional Seas Conventions, thanks to the increase funding under the 8th Replenishment of the Global environment Facility. However, we all know the resources are limited, but together we can become more effective and more impactful.

UNEA provides us with such a platform, and I trust as we finalise those resolutions that they have indeed incorporated this drive to reverse this dangerous trajectory we have put our planet on. UNEP and the MEAs are a critical part of this drive, and whilst shaping future environment and natural resources governance, we are also putting in place sound governance mechanisms, as well as building capacities, to ensure that members states can fulfill their obligations under the numerous environmental treaties. It is in this light that I would like to thank you for inviting the MEAs to UNEA-6.

Thank you for your attention.