

*Your Excellency, Dr. William Samoei Ruto, President of the Republic of Kenya,  
Your Excellency, Paula Navarez, President of the United Nations Economic and  
Social Council,*

*Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment  
Programme (UNEP),*

*Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization  
(WHO),*

*Esteemed Heads of State and Government,*

*Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Allow me to express my sincere appreciation to Your Excellency President Ruto, and to the Government and people of Kenya for the gracious hospitality extended to me and my delegation since our arrival to attend this auspicious **sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6).**

I would also like to congratulate Madam President of UNEA-6, Your Excellency, Ms. Leila Benali, Minister of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development of the Kingdom of Morocco, for her steadfast leadership in advancing the pivotal discussions on the UNEA-6 agenda.

It is an honour to be in Nairobi – a significant UN hub and the home of UNEP.

My attendance in UNEA-6 also affords me – as President of the UN General Assembly – the opportunity to engage with Government representatives and the host country, civil society, the scientific community and the private sector on how best to unleash multilateral action across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

One cannot help but feel the strength in numbers today – and the timeliness of this forum as an additional platform to tap our collective potential and comparative advantages to make a real difference in reviving our strained multilateral system.

**(BRIEF PAUSE)**

*Excellencies,*

We are, without doubt, at a critical moment for the planet – and for the **unity of purpose** we will need if we hope to achieve our 2030 aspirations.

For years, we have known that a healthy environment is both an **essential requirement** for, and **key enabler** of, a more safe, just, and prosperous tomorrow.

Yet, we are woefully off track in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals – the only comprehensive blueprint that was designed to offer ambitious targeted solutions to address the converging challenges of our day by 2030.

At the **2023 SDG Summit**, world leaders acknowledged this reality, and pledged to accelerate progress **across** all the SDGs – including by tackling environmental issues.

In the landmark political declaration adopted in September, the world leaders called for **stronger implementation** of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement – especially in the areas of mitigation, adaptation and means of implementation.

They vowed to take urgent action to **halt and to reverse biodiversity loss** – including by ensuring the **fair and equitable sharing of benefits** from genetic resource use.

And importantly, they acknowledged the serious threats posed by **plastic, air and chemical pollution** – expressing firm support for an international legally binding instrument on **plastic pollution**.

This is groundbreaking work that is already underway – and **making history** here in Nairobi.

As the “world’s parliament on the environment”, the United Nations Environment Assembly is supremely well suited to advance these priorities – and to bring about the tangible integrated results we urgently need across the **sustainable development continuum**.

As the international community, we must move the dial.

**(BRIEF PAUSE)**

Because the current trajectory is not ideal, to say the least.

The global temperature has risen 1.5 degrees over a 12-month period – for the first time on record.

Plastic particulates have been found in every ecosystem on the planet.

As UNEP and other researchers have long warned – if we do nothing – the volume of plastic production will continue to spiral out of control; and by 2050 there will be more plastic at oceans than fish.

And biodiversity is degrading at the fastest rate in history, while air, water and land pollution are causing **9 million** pre-mature deaths each year.

I repeat, **9 million** pre-mature deaths **each year**.

Given that we are confronting an environmental emergency and the consequential need to act with urgency, we must ensure that the outcome of this UNEA-6 advances the human right to a **clean, healthy and sustainable environment** – that, it promotes truly multilateral responses to **restore the balance with nature**.

And that the UNEA-6 outcomes bring about a future that is more equitable, inclusive and resilient for all peoples, everywhere.

As President of the General Assembly, I proudly embrace my duty to **maximize convergence** – to create spaces for **constructive dialogue** and encourage Member States and stakeholders alike to work shoulder-to-shoulder in advancing balanced progress.

There are several prime opportunities on the horizon.

The **Third UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries** and the **Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States** are pivotal occasions to support countries that have contributed the least but are disproportionately impacted by the effects of climate change and biodiversity loss.

In addition, the General Assembly will convene an inaugural **“Sustainability Week”** from 15-19 April at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

This high-level gathering, a cornerstone of my Presidency, will feature sustainability focused events in the sectors of **transport, tourism, energy, and infrastructure**, along with a signature event on **debt sustainability and socio-economic equality** – all aimed at catalysing a giant leap towards the shared future we want.

To that end, I encourage all Member States to participate at the highest level possible.

Equally, I wholeheartedly applaud that UNEA-6 aims to amplify the **Summit of the Future** – and its anticipated outcome, the **Pact of the Future** – through its Ministerial Declaration to be adopted this week.

I have no doubt this will be an invaluable input for the Summit – as world leaders who will gather in New York in September seek to revitalise multilateral cooperation and forge a new global consensus on how to deliver better for **people** and **planet**.

**(BRIEF PAUSE)**

*Excellencies, dear friends,*

In all these endeavors, let us be clear that we are called to action by “**we the peoples**”:

Especially all those who have been under-served and at highest risk of being left furthest behind – LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS – and those under-represented at the negotiation table to advocate for better solutions: that is, women, children, indigenous peoples, persons belonging to minority groups, and other vulnerable communities.

Translating commitments into meaningful change means stepping up implementation of the **Addis Ababa Action Agenda** – by significantly scaling up financing for sustainable development and providing the means of implementation to developing countries.

It means forging the strong and diverse partnerships that will be essential to our success.

And it means mobilizing and allocating the financial and technological support to implement sustainable, and environmentally-sound solutions.

**(BRIEF PAUSE FOR A CLOSE)**



*Excellencies,*

Without being overly alarmist, and as we chart the path ahead, let me conclude with a quote from Maurice Strong – UNEP’s first Executive Director and pioneer of global sustainable development, who once said that: *“I am convinced the prophets of doom have to be taken seriously”*.

I am equally convinced, with the desired **unity of purpose**, we can and must usher in a new era of planetary stewardship – one that catalyzes action across multiple fronts, to bring about **peace, prosperity, progress, and sustainability** for all.

I stand ready to mobilize the General Assembly to this end.

Yes, we are facing formidable challenges.

But I firmly believe that if we can overcome the deepening geopolitical tensions – acting in unison, and laser focused in our ambition – we stand a better chance to succeed in overcoming the myriad of challenges we are up against.

**I thank you.**

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