

UNEP Executive Director

## UNEA-6 HL opening

*(7 minutes)*

**Web title: UNEA-6: Shielding the vulnerable and pushing back against the triple planetary crisis**

Your Excellency William Samoei Ruto, President of the Republic of Kenya,  
Your Excellency Leila Benali, President of UNEA-6 and Minister of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development of Morocco,  
Excellencies, distinguished guests and friends.

Welcome to the High-level opening of the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly in Nairobi, the environmental capital of the world. My thanks to you, President Ruto, for continuing and strengthening Kenya's commitment to UNEP and indeed global environmental action.

Excellencies,

We are here because the environmental crises facing the world are spreading and intensifying. We are living in an age of climate emergency, the warning lights on the planetary dashboard glowing red hot. We are living in an age of withering nature, dying lands and vanishing species. We are living in an age of a planet and people poisoned by chemicals, by plastic, by waste and pollution of all kinds. Our high-carbon, resource-hungry growth has sent some planetary systems teetering to the edge of tipping points. Once these systems fall, they may never rise again. And humanity will also find itself flooded.

But we cannot and must not despair. Because the power to change lies with us. With the members of this Assembly, the governments they represent and all who make up the wider UNEA and UNEP family – from Multilateral Environmental Agreements to scientists, from civil society to youth, from Indigenous Peoples to the businesses and financiers who know they must do things differently.

We, this global family, must stand shoulder-to-shoulder in an unbreakable shield that protects the most vulnerable, in so doing addressing the injustice at the heart of the triple planetary crisis.

We must brace against each other and push back, as one, against the triple planetary crisis to create space for the climate to stabilize and nature to recover, in so doing providing the basis for economies and societies to flourish sustainably.

We must push back against this crisis in lockstep to create space for those who follow, in so doing creating intergenerational equity and helping youth to grow stronger and wiser than those whose places they will take.

Excellencies,

We cannot push back with the force required if we are divided. True strength comes from unity. So, I ask this Assembly to do what it does best. I ask this Assembly to put aside national and regional differences and remember that we all live on this little blue planet called Earth. Think of planetary cycles, not electoral cycles. Remember that if my air is dirty, if my climate is changing, if my shores are awash with plastic, yours are too. We stand together or we fall together. This is inclusive environmental multilateralism.

I ask this Assembly to once again show the Nairobi Spirit that, two years' ago, put us on a path to ending plastic pollution. To conclude the hard work that has gone on over the past weeks and months by passing the resolutions and decisions on the table in the strongest form possible. And, of course, by implementing them with speed and determination.

But I also ask you to recall that this Assembly is much more than one set of resolutions or decisions. It is where the global community gathers to think big and dream bigger. To reimagine how we can work better, smarter, harder and faster – together. To hold the future we want in our mind's eye and make it happen.

We saw such vision yesterday, when many of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements that set the global guardrails on the environment came together in Nairobi for the first time. They sought ways to lift each other up, unite and become more than the sum of their parts. These agreements have already delivered many results. Protected the ozone layer, many species and huge areas of land and sea. Slowed the rate of climate change. Raised the profile of desertification and land degradation action. Eliminated toxic substances dangerous to human and planetary health. And more. If they can do more by unifying their efforts, and if we can all follow suit, the future we all want will become a reality.

Excellencies,

As I said, we are living in an age of intensifying environmental threats. But we are also living in an age of cascading commitments, hope and action. The environmental movement, as embodied in this Assembly, is bigger than ever. Stronger than ever. More united than ever.

We can push back against the triple planetary crisis if we show unity of purpose, at this Assembly and beyond. Purpose to shun fossil fuels and look to new energy sources. Purpose

to conserve and restore the natural world and our lands, which give us life. Purpose to keep harmful chemicals, pollution and waste out of our ecosystems and bodies.

This is our great task, the most important one we will ever undertake. Billions of people are depending on us to succeed. We must not let them down.

Thank you.