



# 3<sup>rd</sup> UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-3) Opinion on Theme

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Reference: P473-1269  
Your reference: 2016/SGB/JL-C/mm  
Our reference: kos/WEF/GUF/KMA

**Bern, 23 November 2016**

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We would like to respond to your letter of 18 November 2016 (Ref: 2016/SGB/JL-C/mm) where you invite to share the views and preferences on the proposed themes for the third UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-3).

**One single theme and a ministerial declaration will send a clear message.** In general, Switzerland supports the concept that there will be one (1) theme for the UNEA including its High Level Segment. A successful UNEA-3 is dependent on delivering a strong authoritative voice, both through decisions taken and through a short and concise message by the ministers to the world. Therefore, Switzerland considers it also important to have a ministerial outcome at UNEAs, possibly a ministerial declaration, so that ministers can take the necessary strategic decisions and provide guidance for other processes. A truly interactive format of the high level dialogue is the basis for such a result. Focusing on a single theme and a ministerial declaration will facilitate the communication of the results coming from UNEA and thus contribute to enhance the role of UNEA as the prime body for policy setting on the environment.

**Actionable outcomes from the assembly must speak to the core mandate of UN Environment.** We agree that UNEA should be addressing a theme that leads to actionable outcomes. Those outcomes must speak to the core mandate of UN Environment which is to *“promote international cooperation in the field of the environment and to recommend, as appropriate, policies to this end, and to provide general policy guidance for the direction and coordination of environmental programmes within the UN system”*. (Stockholm in June 1972, General Assembly, Res 2997 (XXVII), 15 December 1972).

**A more specific theme around “pollution” will make the outcome tangible.** Out of the suggested themes we clearly prefer a theme along the lines of theme 1, tentatively entitled “Pollution free planet: delivering a deal to detoxify the world”. We would choose theme 1 over the other two suggestions because it addresses a global concern while at the same time it is also speaking more directly to the mandate and the authoritative voice of UN Environment.

However, we need to be even more specific. A more concrete theme will make it easier to deliver actionable outcomes and a concise message by ministers. While we are flexible on the exact title, here, we would like to provide some ideas for defining a more concrete theme around pollution:

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- HLPF 2018: A specific topic in the domain of Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP), for example on food (and other) waste or resources, is at the core of UN Environment's work (see UNEA-2 resolutions) and can serve as an input for consideration at the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in 2018 where SDG12 on Sustainable Consumption and Production will be reviewed;
- BRS COPs: The Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm conventions are meeting earlier in the year of 2017. Their theme "A future detoxified: sound management of chemicals and waste" or their anticipated outcomes could also guide a strong message coming out of UNEA-3;
- Marine Pollution: "Marine Litter and Microplastics" is an issue of global concern and would allow UN Environment to become the single one authoritative voice in the UN system. Please see also UNEA-1 and UNEA-2 resolutions.

**In summary**, Switzerland argues for a single theme, a ministerial outcome with an interactive dialogue, and a theme around pollution with a more focused content. This will help to create a clear and tangible outcome for the environment coming out of UNEA-3.