

Committee of Permanent Representatives  
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Conference Room 2

**Outline of the 2017 Environment Assembly's background document on Pollution  
(as of 2 February)<sup>1</sup>**

**Introduction** (1 page): Context and purpose of the report: Building on the mandate of UN Environment the report aims at alerting member States and relevant stakeholders to the human and ecosystem dimension of pollution, and will make the case for transformative actions and commitments at the global, regional, national and local levels on key pollution risk areas

**Section 1- Evidence exists of a polluted planet that impacts human health, ecosystems, and economies<sup>2</sup>. (4 pages)<sup>3</sup>**

State and trends with regards to key pollution risk areas:

- a. Air pollution, including sand and dust storms
- b. Marine pollution
- c. Land/soil pollution
- d. Fresh water pollution, including nutrients pollution
- e. Chemical pollution as a cross cutting issue, including in relation to industrial accidents
- f. Waste including electronics and radioactive waste, micro plastic in marine environment, food waste and land contamination and

Synthesized in easily understandable graphics highlighting:

- ✓ How pollution impacts human health and ecosystems and to what extent, showing in brief where pollutants are accumulating i.e. in air, fresh water, oceans, biota and land and providing key examples capturing the human and ecosystem dimension of pollution: For example: Ogoniland, Bhopal, Minamata, indoor pollution, Fukushima, Deep Water Horizons, Probo Koala, transboundary haze);
- ✓ How pollution is affecting citizens in their everyday life
- ✓ Key pollution drivers by economic sector (e.g. transport (air, road, sea etc.), energy, industry, agriculture, fisheries and , and consumer sectors) and events such as natural hazards triggering technological accidents, industrial accidents, and conflicts;

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<sup>1</sup> This background document has been prepared drawing inspiration on the ideal notion of a pollution free planet. *A pollution free planet would be 'a planet without indirect or direct alteration of the biological, thermal, physical or radioactive properties of any medium in such a way as to create a hazard or potential hazard to human health or to the health, safety or welfare of any living species (einote)*

<sup>2</sup> The GEO-6 process will provide the underpinning scientific evidence for this section which will also be informed by relevant reports already published, including (the list is not exhaustive): WHO Burden of disease study-2016; Lancet commission on Planetary Health – 2015; Costs of inaction on chemicals – 2012; background document for the second edition of the United Nations Environment Assembly “Healthy environment healthy people”- 2016; Convention on Biological Diversity – Biodiversity and Health – 2015; World Bank – Cost of Air pollution – 2016; International Energy Agency – Energy and Air pollution – 2016; Reports of the international Resource Panel; and other relevant reports on pollution

<sup>3</sup> Supported by the Information Document to be produced highlighting progress made on the Global Environment Outlook

- ✓ Local, national and international environmental quality standards and how these measure up against exposure levels of the most vulnerable humans (poorest, women, children, elderly) and ecosystems.
- ✓ The costs of inaction in society: unequal burdens, vulnerability and environmental injustice

## **Section 2- What would it mean to people to have a pollution free (or clean) planet?<sup>4</sup> (4 pages)**

1. Case stories of progress made in addressing pollution over the past decades/successes (e.g. Montreal protocol, lead in fuels, lead in paints, acid-rain, Minamata, etc.) synthesized in graphics.
2. Economic benefits of action on pollution, including examples of multiple benefits
3. Arguments of how securing a pollution free (or clean) planet can help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and respond to existing agreements (e.g. Paris agreement, Kigali agreement, multilateral environmental agreements)

## **Section 3- A Framework of Guidance Principles and Transformative Actions (6 pages)**

### Guidance Principles

1. Prevent pollution at source and reduce wherever it is unavoidable
2. Adopt principle of multiple benefits of action
3. Focus on multiple exposures and body burden
4. Leapfrog technologies and access to innovative financing
5. Build capacity and skills to address implementation and regulatory enforcement
6. Take action at all levels of governance to: detoxify the environment; decarbonize the economy; decouple economic activity from current levels of pollution<sup>5</sup>
7. Promote access to information, public participation and access to justice as called for by Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration

### Major transformative actions required:

1. Systemic changes to production chains, consumption and investment patterns, rather than ad hoc measures or end-of-pipe solutions; behavioural changes which are less polluting and wasteful lifestyles and that reduce pollution risks
2. Policies (regulatory, fiscal, information etc.) and incentives to stimulate systemic and behavioural changes to prevent and reduce pollution
3. Science and open data and information to better guide evidence-based decision making and systems-oriented actions (from integrated assessments, to global, national and local data, decision support systems)
4. Economic and finance-oriented interventions (from impact valuation through fiscal policies, polluter pays policies, to innovative financing models, global funds ...)
5. Technical/technological solutions (from resources efficiency, through circular economy, to product stewardship programmes, fuel improvements, clean vehicles, e-mobility.)
6. Effective institutions (multilateral agreements, innovations and research, formal and non-formal, finance, regulatory policies such as ambient quality standards, emission and effluent standards and effective enforcement of existing policies etc. For example, reinforce the compliance of existing regulatory policies through more innovative and multistakeholder governance models and link compliance with funding.

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<sup>4</sup> The Regional Environmental Outlooks, the Global Waste Management Outlook and the Global Chemicals Outlook will contribute to this section. Some new work may however be required in order for this section to be developed ; A mapping of how pollution is reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals will be developed and included in a graphic.

<sup>5</sup> Healthy Environment, Healthy People, p 11 (background paper for UN Environment Assembly 2, 2016)

## **Section 4- Strategic leadership and commitments (3 pages)**

### **Multi-stakeholder engagements**

- ✓ Active citizen engagement and increased role of non-state actors (e.g. in measuring and monitoring pollution and demanding responses from relevant decision-makers)
- ✓ Responsible private sector, including finance sector, and industry commitments (e.g. pollution avoidance and solutions for clean up; life-cycle/circular approaches to product design and management; finance sector undertakes due diligence on polluting industries); extended producer responsibility schemes, awareness of opportunities that the environmental goods and services sector offers to the private sector; better risk management and response
- ✓ Visionary political leadership at all levels, including the United Nations, mayors and city elders, reflected in inter-ministerial, cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder mechanisms to develop, implement and monitor policies, and as a key enabler.
- ✓ Mobilized research community which can provide monitoring, assessment and methodology support to inform decision-making and evaluate progress made
- ✓ Committed international, regional and sub national organizations (e.g. on pollution prevention and management, monitoring and enforcement), enabling cooperation and capacity-building among countries including elaborating on the role of UN Environment.
- ✓ Strategic partnerships and networks which can be key in achieving systematic change and work towards ambitious and measurable targets:
  - Innovative partnerships, voluntary agreements, and platforms (to scale up actions and induce change)
  - Integrated networks of state and non-state actors (corporate, public, civil society) – to prevent and address pollution

### **Pledges and commitments**

Multi-tiered commitments and responses to act on Pollution, within the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, based on their capacity:

- a. Member states, (e.g. minimum national ambient standards/chemicals management agreements /monitoring frameworks/early action on emerging issues, etc.) according to capacity and development levels.
- b. Partnerships, (e.g. from members of the Climate and Clean Air Coalition, Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles, etc)
- c. Private sector, including finance sector (e.g. on finance, technology, innovative solutions)
- d. Impacted sectors, including health, tourism, etc.
- e. Mayors, Local Governments and other non-state actors (e.g. on monitoring; on waste policies; pollution measures)
- f. Citizens (lifestyle changes, consumer choices) enacting/embedding a pollution free planet as a fundamental human right and responsibility of every citizen

### **Conclusion (2 pages)**

The conclusion will bring together the above material to enable a goals-based discussion on what a pollution free planet could look like and how it could be different from today's. It would propose key actions, looking at short term (quick wins), medium term and long term measures to manage, limit or ban key pollutants, decarbonize, detoxify, decouple environment degradation from resource use, and enhance ecosystem resilience and restoration, supported by a context-appropriate mix of targeted, integrated strategies.