

Zero Draft of the Ministerial Outcome Document of the 2017 UN Environment Assembly “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet”

Comments from Canada
(August 30, 2017)

We, the world’s ministers of environment, gathered for the Third Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly to discuss a path towards a pollution-free planet, welcome the progress that has been achieved by the international community in some areas to reduce pollution, but also recognize that there remains considerable work to be done. We will continue our efforts to secure a cleaner future for our people and planet. We will work with all stakeholders to identify and implement innovative solutions to end the pollution of our air, soil, freshwater and oceans.

Here are a few examples of where we can and must do better:

In South America, young mothers like Maria handle raw mercury in artisanal gold mines, because it is the only way to make a living. In North America, families like the Kellogg’s relocate to areas where their children can play outside without fear of an asthma attack. In Europe, schools like Fatima Gunic hoist flags in the playground to warn children of high levels of air pollution. In Africa, communities like Ogoniland try to survive in land saturated by oil pollution. In the Middle East, residents in places like Khuzestan must breathe through the growing number of sand and dust storms swallowing their homes and closing their schools. And in Asia, people like 13 year old Lim Seong-joon are crippled because of chemicals being used incorrectly. In fact, during the next hour, 1,500 people around the world will needlessly die from environmental causes.

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As the representatives of 193 nations, we believe that, regardless of gender or culture, faith or wealth, no child should die from dirty water or poor hygiene. Yet today, nearly 2,000 children below the age of five will do just that. No one should choke because they walk down a street or cook a hot meal in their home. Yet every day, 9 out of 10 of us will continue to breathe air that is unsafe and 20,000 people will die because of it. No community should be contaminated by hazardous chemicals and waste. Yet of the 130,000 chemicals on the market, only a fraction is properly tested, labelled or tracked. No ecosystem should be so damaged by human activity that it ceases to function properly. Yet every year, we dump up to 13 million tonnes of plastic in our oceans and 50 million tonnes of electronic waste on our land. The poorest and most vulnerable people in society are often disproportionately affected. No one should be left behind as we strive to deliver the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This Assembly recognizes that everyone should have access to clean water, safe food and clean air. Any threat to them is a threat to our health, our society, our economy, our security and our very survival. Pollution is not new, but with the global population expected to reach 10 billion people by 2050, these self-imposed threats have never been greater or more preventable.

We acknowledge that leadership, determination, collaboration and policy coherence, knowledge, innovation and clean technology can help transform these challenges into new opportunities. The transition to a pollution free planet can help end poverty, improve health, reduce global warming, build peace, protect human rights, create jobs and drive clean, sustainable economic growth that leaves no one behind. We must recapture and reinvest the 300 tonnes of gold buried in electronic waste every

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- Comment [C1]: We would suggest relocating an existing paragraph to the introduction to identify what the document is.
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- Comment [C2]: We wonder if the name used (Maria), along with the other specific names in this paragraph, are real examples or whether they are fictional. We are not sure about using name if they are fictional.
- Deleted: monitor air pollution
- Comment [C3]: We suggest adding a source.
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- Comment [C4]: We suggest moving this part at the beginning.
- Deleted: We, the world’s ministers of environment, gathered for the Third Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, declare that this cannot and will not continue.
- Deleted: We commit to securing a pollution free future for our people and planet. And we commit to working with every possible stakeholder to rapidly explore and implement every possible solution to end the pollution of our air, soil, freshwater and oceans.
- Comment [C5]: Would need the source, perhaps as a ... [1]
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- Deleted: consumer choices
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- Deleted: or other international agreements.
- Deleted: Yet it is still the poorest and most vulnerable ... [3]
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year; the \$100 billion in plastic packaging being thrown away; the \$1 trillion economic loss from exposing children to lead in paint; and the \$5 trillion spent on healthcare because of air pollution, among other targeted pollution prevention actions. To do so, we must dramatically scale up and accelerate the solutions that countries, cities, businesses and individual citizens are already using.

We acknowledge the magnitude of the challenges, and opportunities reported in Towards a Pollution Free Planet and supported by the UN Global Goals, and so we pledge to prevent, mitigate and manage all forms of pollution by:

- Supporting the development, collation and use of reliable scientific data. This includes better data and disaggregated data; better multidisciplinary indicators that are measurable; more efficient data gathering and monitoring; easier access to and wider availability of information; and an increase in awareness raising and knowledge sharing. This will promote evidence based decision making in the public and private sectors, effective standard setting by all stakeholders and greater participation by citizens from all walks of life.
- Targeting pollutants with focused environmental agreements, strengthening already existing actions, and tailored action. This can be achieved in three ways. First, by continuing concerted action under the chemicals and waste multilateral environmental agreements and other international instruments and fora; by developing global policy to prevent, reduce and control pollutants where the science is clear, but actions do not yet exist or are insufficient; and by increasing research on pollutants where the weight-of-evidence impact is not yet clear.
- Cultivating economic productivity and job creation by using incentives to increase innovation and the uptake of new technology, including clean technology. This will enable producers and consumers to rethink, reuse, recycle, recover and remake any products, materials and services.
- Nurturing integrated urban development to create more livable villages, towns and cities, which thrive in harmony with the surrounding environment. This includes accelerating the sound management of chemicals and waste, encouraging responsible lifestyle choices, prioritizing access to clean energy and transport, investments in green infrastructure, building smart cities and leveraging the power of big data.
- Promoting fiscal incentives to stimulate systemic and behavioural changes. This includes understanding and considering the true cost of pollution in financial decisions and redirecting investments from the short-term profits of polluting activities to the more sustainable profits of greener alternatives.
- Strengthening and enforcing more integrated policies, regulations and laws. This will be achieved by supporting institutions and building capacity; bolstering monitoring and accountability systems; and sharing best practices, standards, policy instruments and tools.
- Creating and expanding partnerships across the United Nations, as well as with governments, the private sector, academia, civil society and individual citizens to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the sustainable development goals. This includes emphasizing enormous potential of partnerships between different stakeholders among developing nations.

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- Taking action to improve air quality and address short-lived climate pollutants to protect human health and the environment, reduce negative impacts – including on the economy – and promote sustainable development.

As ministers of the environment, we have a special role to play in delivering on those commitments, but we cannot do it alone. We urge our fellow citizens to take action as every one of us is responsible for making that happen. And, as mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, sisters and brothers, friends, colleagues, neighbours and communities, we cannot overstate the need to make it happen quickly.↓

Therefore, we warmly welcome the resolutions adopted at the Third Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly. We applaud the many pledges from diverse stakeholders that address critical environmental challenges. And we restate our commitment to work towards a pollution free planet for present and future generations.

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Yet it is still the poorest and most vulnerable people in society who are disproportionately affected; often paying the price for the action of the wealthiest.		
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