

Ministerial declaration of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its third session

Towards a pollution-free planet¹

As the world's ministers for the environment, we represent around seven billion men, women and children, rich and poor, young and old, from every nation, faith and culture on this beautiful but fragile planet. We believe that every one of those people should be able to live in a clean environment. Our water, air and soil are our most precious natural resources, and any threat to them is a threat to our health, our society, our ecosystems, our economy, our security and our very survival. That threat is already upon us and is cutting short the lives of millions of people every year.

That is why we are gathered with political, industrial, scientific and civil society leaders at this third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly to work towards a pollution-free planet. It is also why we believe it is imperative that we alert people everywhere to the following.

1. Every day, 9 out of 10 people breathe air that is unsafe and 20,000 will die as a result, while nearly 2,000 children below the age of five will die from diseases caused by dirty water and poor hygiene. Women and girls continue to be disproportionately affected by such conditions, whether from cooking using dirty fuel or walking farther to find safe water. Countless millions of people suffer health problems because every year we dump up to 13 million tonnes of plastic in our oceans and 50 million tonnes of electronic waste on our land.
2. We cannot even measure the human impact of allowing thousands of chemicals to be used in everyday objects without proper testing, labelling or tracking, which we believe is both inexcusable and preventable. Far too many communities lack information about the chemicals and hazardous substances they use or are exposed to and/or the capacity to manage them safely.
3. However, we also believe that the knowledge and technological solutions for reducing pollution already exist, although many stakeholders have yet to explore and implement the many opportunities that are available. We are encouraged by the numerous success stories of countries, cities and businesses addressing air, soil, freshwater and marine pollution issues. Recent examples include the adoption of the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol and the entry into force of the Minamata Convention on Mercury.
4. As countries strive to deliver the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement, we acknowledge the links between pollution, climate change, biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation. Tackling pollution will contribute to national sustainable development by fighting poverty, improving health, creating decent jobs, improving life below water and on land, and reducing global warming.
5. We are concerned by the legacy of damage and pollution that armed conflict causes to the environment, often delaying recovery and threatening the health of people and ecosystems.
6. We are also concerned that unsustainable land management creates phenomena, such as sand and dust storms, and wildfires, which pose a great challenge to sustainable development.
7. We are convinced that determination, collaboration, knowledge generation and sharing, innovation and clean technology are transforming such challenges into opportunities for tackling pollution, but that we can do more.
8. Therefore, we are determined to scale up actions that prevent, mitigate and manage the pollution of air, land and soil, freshwater and oceans:
 - (a) We will encourage the development, collation and use of reliable scientific data by providing better multidisciplinary indicators; improving capacity for efficient gathering, verification and monitoring of data; and increasing transparency by making it easier to access such information more widely;
 - (b) We will promote evidence-based decision-making in the public and private sectors, effective standard-setting by all stakeholders and greater participation by individuals from all walks of life;

¹ Final draft as at 2 November 2017.

- (c) We will target all forms of pollutants through environmental agreements and tailored action;
- (d) We will accelerate the implementation of existing multilateral agreements, conventions and regulations to prevent, control and reduce pollution and, where the science is clear that such policies and actions should exist, but do not, we will develop them, and where the impact is not yet clear, we will increase relevant research;
- (e) We will foster economic productivity, innovation, job creation and environmentally sound technologies;
- (f) We will stimulate sustainable consumption and production by making it easier to rethink, reuse, recycle, recover and remake any products, materials and services;
- (g) We will promote the adoption of policies and approaches for the sound management of chemicals and waste, including the use of integrated life cycle, value chains and sustainable chemistry;
- (h) We will make the best use of policy links, trade, investment and innovation opportunities;
- (i) We will work with local governments to encourage sustainable models of urban development;
- (j) We will promote fiscal incentives to stimulate positive change, including by capturing the true cost of pollution, including its externalities, in financial decisions and redirecting investment from the short-term profits of polluting activities to the more sustainable profits of greener alternatives;
- (k) We will strengthen and enforce more integrated policies, regulations and laws by supporting institutions and building capacity; bolstering monitoring and accountability systems; and sharing best practices, standards, policy instruments and tools;
- (l) We will create and expand multi-stakeholder partnerships, under the auspices of the United Nations, between Governments, the private sector, academia, civil society and individuals;
- (m) We will use South-South cooperation, regional dialogue and coordination across the United Nations to target pollution.

9. As ministers for the environment, we recognize our role in delivering those commitments and promoting coordinated action. We will focus on preventive measures, taking account of the responsibilities and capacities of each country, and emphasize the need for greater cooperation, through such means as the exchange of experiences, resources and technologies, while taking into consideration the Rio Principles on environment and development.

10. However, responsibility for combating pollution does not rest with national Governments alone. We need support from the private sector, international organizations, civil society and individuals. Everyone has a responsibility as mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, partners, sisters and brothers, friends, employers, colleagues, neighbours and communities.

11. We cannot overstate the need for rapid, large-scale and coordinated action against pollution and applaud the [XXXX]²pledges made in the “Beat Pollution” engagement campaign.

12. We support the actions and resolutions agreed by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its third session.

13. We acknowledge the magnitude of challenges and opportunities set out in the report by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, *Towards a Pollution-Free Planet*, and invite all stakeholders to use it.

14. Moving towards a pollution-free planet is a long-term endeavour. We therefore request the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to engage stakeholders in proposing a common plan for implementation for our consideration.

² Number of pledges received by end of Assembly to be inserted.

15. We will advocate for this declaration, including in meetings of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, and we will follow up on its implementation at the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, to be held in 2019.
 16. This is our commitment to sounding the alarm on the health and well-being of our people, and to working towards a pollution-free planet.
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