

Ministerial Declaration of the 2017 UN Environment Assembly “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet”

Final draft¹

As the world’s ministers of 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 among our most precious natural resources. 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: pollution is cutting short the lives of an estimated 9 millions of people every year.

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

1. Every day, 9 out of 10 of us breathe air that is unsafe and 20,000 people will die because of it. Nearly 2,000 children below the age of five will die from dirty water and poor hygiene. Women and girls continue to be disproportionately affected, whether it be from cooking with dirty fuel or walking further to find safe water. ~~Countless millions suffer health problems because of~~ Every year we dump up to 13 million tonnes of plastic in our oceans and 50 million tonnes of electronic waste on our land, ~~causing severe damage to ecosystems, livelihoods and our health.~~

2. We ~~believe that it is both inexcusable and preventable that cannot even measure the human impact of allowing tens of thousands of chemicals to be~~ used in everyday objects ~~and more than 20,000 pesticides products applied in the field~~ without proper testing, labelling or tracking. ~~We believe that it is both inexcusable and preventable.~~ Far too many communities either lack information about the chemicals and hazardous substances they use or are exposed to, or the capacity to manage them safely.

3. However, we also believe that the knowledge and technological solutions to reduce pollution already exist, though many stakeholders have yet to explore and implement the many opportunities 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. ~~We further acknowledge that pollution disproportionately affects the poor and the vulnerable.~~ 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.

Comment [EU MS1]: Support to the inclusion of the gender perspective here and in OP1.

Comment [EU MS2]: In order not to exclude by omission biodiversity and oceans among most precious resources.

Comment [EU MS3]: To include the main result of the Lancet report reference : Landrigan, Philip J., et al. "The Lancet Commission on pollution and health." The Lancet (2017)

Comment [EU MS4]: Plastic litter (different from e-waste) in the oceans is not so much a problem that makes "countless millions suffer health problems" but rather a problem for ecosystems and biodiversity

Comment [EU MS5]: Bringing forward this sentence would in our opinion strengthen and shorten the message of the OP.

Comment [EU MS6]: This paragraph is restricted to chemicals in products and thus excludes pesticides, among others. We would favour an explicit reference to pesticides here (figure taken from Lancet Report).

Comment [EU MS7]: We welcome the addition.

Comment [EU MS8]: To reflect a passage that figured in the previous draft of the document.

¹ As issued on 2 November 2017

6. We are also concerned that unsustainable land management can lead to soil degradation and pollution by nutrients and other substances, and creates phenomena such as sand and dust storms, wildfires, and others which pose a great challenge to sustainable development.

Comment [EU MS9]: Para 6 at the moment does not have a clear link to the overall « pollution » topic so we suggest to add these two notions to pinpoint some concrete challenges.

7. We are convinced that determination, collaboration, knowledge generation and sharing, innovation, resource efficiency and clean technology are transforming these challenges into opportunities already providing concrete solutions to tackle pollution, but that we can do more.

Comment [EU MS10]: It does not seem appropriate to give the impression that pollution can be considered as an opportunity (Friends of the earth was strongly against this).

8. Therefore, we are determined to scale up actions that prevent, mitigate and manage the pollution of air, land and soil, freshwater and oceans:

Comment [EU MS11]: OP8: we would prefer starting with OP8(c+d). Starting with OP8(a+b) potentially suggests that we first need more reliable data before taking action. Swapping these elements makes the text more actionable upon first reading. Preferably OP8(k) could also be shifted upwards.

a. We will increase research and encourage the development, collation and use of reliable scientific data. This will include 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.

Comment [EU MS12]: We suggest a colon to make clear that 8 is the chapeau to what follows.

b. We will promote the precautionary approach and 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.

Comment [EU MS13]: Proposal to move the increase in research from 8d to 8a so that 8d is dedicated to implementation.

c. We will target all forms of pollutants through environmental agreements and tailored action.

Comment [EU MS14]: Both concepts should be reflected at the same level.

d. We will accelerate the implementation of existing multilateral agreements, conventions ~~and~~, regulations and programmes to prevent, control and reduce pollution. Where the science is clear that such policies and actions should exist, but do not, we will develop them. Where the impact science is not yet clear, we will increase research.

Comment [EU MS15]: To encompass other initiatives that are not legal agreements.

e. We will foster economic productivity, while promoting innovation, job creation and environmentally sound technologies.

Comment [EU MS16]: As repeatedly commented on, this part is not compatible with the precautionary approach : where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation. We thus propose to add the precautionary approach in b and delete it here.

f. We will stimulate sustainable consumption and production, by providing reliable sustainability information to consumers, increasing education and awareness-raising, and making it easier to rethink, reuse, recycle, recover and remake any products, materials and/or services and prevent and reduce waste generation.

Comment [EU MS17]: Revert to previous version. We find it important that the MOD doesn't just call for economic productivity as such.

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, non chemical alternatives and sustainable chemistry.

Comment [EU MS18]: In our opinion, services cannot be „recycled“ or “recovered”.

h. We will make the best use of policy links, trade, investment and innovation opportunities in order to stimulate sustainable growth and tackle pollution.

Comment [EU MS19]: If sustainable chemistry is mentioned, it is essential to also have non chemical alternatives.

i. We will work with local governments to encourage sustainable models of urban development.

Comment [EU MS20]: Same rationale as 8(e).

j. We will promote fiscal incentives to stimulate positive changes. This will include 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.

Comment [EU MS21]: We support that the role of local governments is highlighted in this para.

k. We will strengthen and enforce more integrated policies, regulations and laws. We will achieve this 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.

Comment [EU MS23]: strong support

m. We will use South-South cooperation, regional dialogue and coordination across the United Nations to target pollution.

9. As ministers of environment, we recognize our role in delivering these commitments and promoting coordinated action, taking into consideration the Rio Principles on Environment and Development. We will focus on preventive measures, ~~taking account of each country's responsibilities and capacities.~~ We will also emphasise 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.~~

Comment [EU MS23]: We should equally take as a basis all the Rio principles.

Comment [EU MS24]: The reference to the Rio principles is ill-placed. Many Rio principles are not directly linked to cooperation but also concern purely national actions.

10. However, responsibility for combatting 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 co-ordinated action against pollution and applaud the [XXXX]² pledges made in the Beat Pollution engagement campaign.

12. We ~~support~~ agree to deliver on the actions, commitments and resolutions ~~agreed-adopted~~ by the ~~Third Session of the~~ UN Environment Assembly.

Comment [EU MS25]: Supporting the resolutions and decisions in essence does not necessarily entail action.

Comment [EU MS26]: To also cover the decisions that were taken in previous UNEA2 and were relevant to pollution, while shortening the text!

13. We acknowledge the magnitude of challenges and opportunities in the report by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, Towards a Pollution-Free Planet³ and invite all stakeholders to use it.

14. Moving towards a pollution-free planet is a long-term endeavour. We request the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to follow-up, in a coherent manner, on the voluntary commitments, resolutions and decisions made at the Third Session of the UN Environment Assembly and to [engage stakeholders in proposing a common plan for implementation for our consideration at the next UN Environment assembly].

15. As addressing pollution is a crucial element for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, we ~~We~~ will advocate for this declaration, including at the high-level political forum on sustainable development, and we will follow up on its implementation at our next session in 2019.

Comment [EU MS27]: Important to stress the links with the 2030 Agenda.

16. This is our commitment to sounding the alarm on the health and wellbeing of our people, and to working towards a pollution-free planet.

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

³ UNEP/EA.3/25