

Statement from the Indigenous Peoples' Major Group,
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Indigenous peoples have always regarded our health and wellbeing as intrinsically linked to our natural environment. We have thereby nurtured our territories not only for our health and wellbeing but also for our culture, collective survival and that of the future generation. Our territories are spread throughout the world in different ecosystems -- from the Arctic, the Amazon, the coast and rivers, the mountains, and we have developed profound indigenous knowledge in managing and conserving our resources. However, our lands and resources are being given away to concessions for mining and the extractive industries, for large hydro-power dams, for dumpsites including toxic wastes, for monocrop plantations, commercial agriculture that are dependent on toxic pesticides and synthetic fertilizers, among others. We didn't ask for these, more so, have not been part in decision making which makes us victims of unjust development and systemic discrimination.

Various pollutants from these concessions are poisoning our soil, lakes, rivers, forests, mountains, coast, wildlife and our food systems. Further, the prevalence of inadequate health care and poverty in our communities are worsened by exposure to environmental contaminants which undergo bio magnification when they enter our food chain. When we oppose these projects and assert our rights to our lands, territories and resources, we are subjected to different forms of human rights violations including arbitrary arrests and detention, and political killings. According to Global Witness, majority of those killed for defending the environment are from indigenous peoples. This continues and the rate is increasing as land and resource- grab is also worsening in our territories. Further, our traditional and indigenous knowledge are completely undermined, weakened and disregarded as critical elements in our sustainable resource management systems that is benefitting humanity, as we lose our lands and resources. Eighty percent (80%) of the world's remaining forest biodiversity are in indigenous territories—which is not coincidental but rather linked to our conservation and sustainable resource management systems.

The Indigenous Peoples Major Group recommends the following to UNEA towards a pollution-free planet:

1. Develop specific measures and programmes to clean-up, rehabilitate, restore indigenous peoples' territories damaged by pollution and ensure the effective implementation of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants; and stop the pollution of indigenous territories in all its forms;
2. Recognize the traditional knowledge as equal to scientific knowledge and the land and resource tenure rights and sustainable resource management systems of indigenous peoples and integrate these as essential elements in addressing pollution and achieving sustainable development for all ;
3. Take action to ensure the protection of environment defenders and the establishment of effective redress mechanisms to guarantee the accountability of human rights violators including the private sector; and finally,

4. Address the systemic causes of pollution and its linkages to economic domination and the adverse social impacts, marginalization and dis-empowerment of the majority including indigenous peoples.