



## Major Groups and Stakeholders Statement Towards a Pollution-Free South East and Southern Europe 4-5 December 2018 Belgrade

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We, Major Groups and Stakeholders representing non-governmental networks in South East and Southern Europe, met in the margins of the Ministerial Conference on innovative solutions to pollution in the region. We welcome the conference in preparation for the fourth UN Environment Assembly (UNEA4).

On 3-4 September 2018, a European Regional Consultative Meeting of Major Groups and Stakeholders (MGS) took place in Tallinn, Estonia to prepare Major Groups and Stakeholders inputs to the 2nd Joint Preparatory Retreat of the Bureaux of the UNEA and of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, the 2019 Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum, and the fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA4).

Building on the outcome of the Tallinn meeting and the Ministerial Joint Regional Vision Conference on "*Innovative Solutions to Pollution*" in South East and Southern Europe, we put forward the following recommendations:

### **Justification for Regional Cooperation on Thematic Issues based on the Sustainable Development Goals and their successful implementation**

Governments should, in close cooperation with NGOs, promote a hybrid "socially-oriented" approach towards implementing tools enabling people to become "smart communities". Hybrid in this sense means combining a top-down approach (from authorities to citizens) with a bottom-up one (from citizens to authorities).

The Western Balkans - with their well-preserved mountains, forests, grasslands, natural rivers, lakes and coastline - represent one of the most important parts of Europe's ecological network, and is an area with of outstanding and diverse natural beauty.

### **Air Pollution**

A regional programme and initiative is needed to implement pollution prevention. Almost every country in the region has a major problem with air pollution affecting human health and the environment.

From this moment onwards, without further delay, we need to commit our efforts and resources - both financial and institutional - to tackle air pollution in the region.

### **Water and Sanitation**

National governments should be empowered to apply a Human Rights approach to drinking water and sanitation services to Leave No One Behind. National legislation is essential to guarantee the enforcement of these Human Rights.

An emphasis should be made on how transboundary water bodies imply joint responsibility. The prevention of contamination of water bodies should be a joint effort undertaken by all stakeholders.

It must be understood that access to clean drinking water goes hand-in-hand with everyone's responsibility and awareness. This can also be a major step towards water pollution prevention.

Educating new generations on innovative solutions can furthermore be a major step towards achieving SDG6 on clean water.

### **Soil and Agriculture**

We encourage governments and business partners to promote and engage in climate-smart, sustainable and environmentally friendly agricultural practices that ensure the production of sufficient, safe and quality food, as well as avoiding soil contamination and pollution caused by agricultural chemicals and improper disposal of waste.

This addresses: 1. climate change, 2. food security, 3. Good soil management practices

### **Sustainable consumption and production**

This is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable Development. For it to be realised, a fundamental change of the production chain is needed to make it sustainable and fair.

### **Maximising the prevention of waste and hazardous characteristics**

We see the need for clear and common definitions of waste and safe and smart recycling practices that are relevant for the region!

### **Support regional approaches and cooperation**

These should support the efficient prevention of pollution and sustainable management of natural resources.

The regional NGO movement should be strengthened in favour of normal civil society versus project-based actions.

### **Cooperation between governmental institutions and wide range of stakeholders**

This should highlight innovative social environment start-up initiatives.

The focus should be on socially responsible start-ups and local business that are in line with the SDGs.

Funding should be allocated with the aim of increasing the ability to lobby for innovative solutions that benefit the region as a whole.

### **Appreciate the support of the United Nations Environment Programme in ensuring the participation and engagement of civil society in ministerial processes**

We call upon UN Environment to create opportunities for civil society from South East and Southern Europe to take part in the 2019 Global Major Groups and Stakeholder Forum and fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA4).

**5 December 2018  
Belgrade, Republic of Serbia**