

Resumed Fifth Session of the UN Environment Assembly New Zealand national statement

(Delivered by Permanent Representative to the UN Environment Programme,
Mr. Nathan Glassey)

432 words / approximately 3 minutes

Mr. President, Excellencies, Executive Director, and colleagues.

Three years ago, my colleague addressing UNEA-4 described the state of the global environment as perilous. I wish today that I could describe it in better terms. But I cannot.

The global environment, our environment, sits precariously on the edge of disaster.

Climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution are not future problems to prepare against. They are the problems of today.

We must take the opportunity of this Environment Assembly to come together, embracing the shift from a destructive consumptive economy to a circular one.

As member states we must lead collective action. But civil society, business, and indigenous people all have roles to play. Bringing diverse parties together will require the multilateral system to be supported and strengthened.

Mr. President,

If we are to end the destructive behaviour that threatens our environment and ourselves, we need to consider the environment differently. We need to embrace new ideas. In doing so, we need to ensure we have the right safeguards in place to protect vulnerable communities and that we are taking responsibility for managing any risks associated with those technologies.

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In the world view of Māori, New Zealand's indigenous people, the environment is something to be respected, not exploited. The Māori approach to managing the environment is based on "Kaitiakitanga", guardianship and protection. Recognising the value of this idea, and ideas like it from around the world, is an important step towards truly sustainable and circular economies. In some cases, nature has its own rights by law.

Combatting plastic pollution is a key step in our progress towards a circular global economy. New Zealand fully supports the process towards establishing an internationally legally binding instrument to combat plastic pollution.

In New Zealand, we have made good progress over the past three years. Our 2019 ban on plastic bags has meant over one billion fewer plastic bags have ended up in landfills or in the ocean. But, there is still more to be done, and New Zealanders are ready.

Last year the New Zealand Government announced that it would phase out hard to recycle plastics and some single use plastics by 2025. The New Zealand Government has also launched a \$50m Plastics Innovation Fund to support projects that reimagine how we make, use and dispose of plastics.

Mr. President,

For too long we have considered the environment to be something separate from ourselves. Something that existed outside the window. Something we could take from. We know how flawed this mind-set is. We can't be separated from our environment. Its future is our future.

Thank you.