

**Statement on behalf of UNEP's NGO Major Group to the UNEA Resolution/Decision 8: Strengthening UNEP's Role in Promoting Air Quality**

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Jouni Nissinen, the European Environmental Bureau

Thank you, Chair.

The NGO major group fully endorses the common statement of all the nine major groups.

In addition, we would specifically like to draw your attention to the impact of air quality to the Arctic region. It is a fact that, currently, air pollutants generally travel from industrially developed regions northward to the Arctic, where pollution contributes to heating up the polar climate.

This problem is further aggravated by pollution from ships' bunker fuels, which lead to so-called black carbon emissions.

Mercury air emissions have similar characteristics to Persistent Organic Pollutants, in that they are transported by air and water to distant sites, including the Arctic and oceans. One of the major sources of mercury to the air are coal-fired power stations. Humans are exposed to this dangerous chemical when mercury enters the food chain. Impacts on health include, among others, permanent and irreversible brain damage to children.

We believe that this issue of air quality and impacts to the Arctic region should be addressed by UNEP's work in respect of this agenda item. we believe that UNEP can have a positive role in solving this serious problem.

Thank you.