**2nd UNEA of UNEP**

**Nairobi, 23-27 May 2016**

EU+MS Opening Statement for the opening plenary

## Monday, 23 May 2016 (10:00)

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Distinguished colleagues,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the EU and its 28 Member States.

First of all, let me take the opportunity to express our appreciation to the Government of Kenya for hosting this second meeting of the United Nations Environment Assembly. We also extend our sincere appreciation to the Executive Director Mr. Achim Steiner, to the UNEP Secretariat, the Committee of Permanent Representatives and to the UNEA Bureau for their hard work in preparing this session.

Furthermore, we would like to congratulate Mr. Erik Solheim on his recent election as UNEP’s next Executive Director.

The EU and its Member States are pleased to see such a large number of delegates attending this session and we are delighted that a high ministerial participation is expected during the High Level Segment on Thursday and Friday. Together with the large variety of issues addressed in the resolutions to be agreed at this meeting, this reflects the crucial role of UNEA and reaffirms UNEP’s strengthened mandate as *the* global environmental authority.

Madam/Mr. President,

This second session of UNEA convenes at an important moment in time. In 2015 the international community made remarkable breakthroughs. Last September we adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a new universal, transformational and integrated paradigm for sustainable development. Further, the Paris climate agreement represents a turning point in our fight against climate change.

However, the most important work remains to be done: putting these and other important commitments, including Multilateral Environmental Agreements, into practice. UNEA-2 is the perfect occasion for governments from around the globe to demonstrate they stand ready for the integrated, coordinated and effective implementation of these commitments. The outcome of this second session of UNEA should demonstrate and strengthen the roles of UNEP, as the leading UN authority on the environment, and UNEA, as the collective voice for the environment, in the implementation process. UNEP has to enhance its leading role to foster multilateral coordination for integration of environmental management, including among UN agencies.

Serious challenges remain for us as the international community. For instance, around 25 percent of the global burden of disease is environment related nowadays. Further, environmental degradation may provoke serious consequences in terms of social and economic instability, including forced displacement.

UNEA should therefore demonstrate that global action on a healthier planet is urgent. Ensuring waste prevention and the sound management of chemicals and waste is an essential element in this. For the EU and its Member States, it is also important that this UNEA promotes action to improve the marine environment, which will make a valuable contribution to achieving sustainable development. UNEA should commit to promoting sustainable consumption and production, which is relevant to achieving many of the SDGs, and demonstrate how the transition to a circular economy can contribute to sustainable economic growth and new jobs.

Another priority for this week is concluding our discussion on UNEPs stakeholder engagement policy. [Under your personal guidance] we arrived at a good compromise; with the necessary constructive spirit we are confident that a final agreement can be reached this week.

We attach a lot of value to flexible partnerships between UNEP and other UN organisations, national governments, NGO’s, the private sector and other partners. The goals and targets of Agenda 2030 cannot be achieved without active participation of all relevant stakeholders. We need all actors, governments, science, industry and civil society alike, to boost the efforts necessary for its implementation. We therefore look forward to the multi-stakeholder discussions as part of our meeting. In particular, partnerships will be essential for following up on the Financial Inquiry and making the financial system more sustainable, and in mobilizing resources for sustainable investments.

Regarding the preparation of resolutions for adoption at UNEA a lot of ground has been covered in the intersessional period from OECPR-2, but still there is a big workload ahead of us for the coming days. The EU and its Member States are ready to collaborate on this, building on the progress achieved so far and fostering consensus.

Madam/Mr. President,

The EU and its Member States are committed to work together with other partners in ensuring the best possible outcome from this second session of the UNEA.

Thank you.

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