

FULL VERSION

**NATIONAL STATEMENT FOR THE HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE 2ND SESSION OF
THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY, MINISTERIAL DIALOGUE
“DELIVERING ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION OF THE 2030 AGENDA FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”**

[Estimated reading time: 5 Minutes]

President of the United Nations Environment Assembly,

Excellencies,

Introduction: 2030 Agenda and UNEA-2 Outcomes

The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) is the key global process that deals with important environmental issues. As a reflection of our collective will to protect the environment, we will be addressing some 20 resolutions spanning from the protection of oceans to chemicals and waste management. Many of these are related to the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Of importance to many of us is the resolution on “Sustainable Consumption and Production”. It is directly relevant to the 2030 Agenda given the need to minimise the use of resources and the emissions of waste and pollutants in the pursuit of sustainable development. Together, the steps we take at UNEA will bring us closer to the universal aspirations captured in the 2030 Agenda.

Singapore's Efforts in Pursuing Sustainable Development

2 Every country must do its part in the collective effort to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda. As the first few countries to form a dedicated environment ministry in 1972, Singapore has addressed our environmental challenges through innovation and imagination, which allows us to have a clean environment today. Similarly, we continue to address new environmental challenges with proactive planning and innovation. Hence, we have developed the Sustainable Singapore Blueprint 2015, which sets out our national vision and plans for the next phase of sustainable development until 2030.

3 There are several goals in the Blueprint. Two of which are especially relevant to the themes of UNEA-2. They are becoming a zero waste nation and building a leading green economy. Besides innovation, both goals require active cooperation from stakeholders, ranging from communities to companies, to take ownership of the environment. Only then can we achieve our goal of having zero landfills and institutionalising best sustainable business practices that reduce environmental externalities while improving bottom-lines and creating high quality green jobs in the process.

Air Pollution

4 In our quest for sustainable development, a key environmental challenge which is also faced by many countries is air pollution. Besides stunting economic development, air pollution has adverse impacts on human health. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimated that 7 million deaths occur every year from air pollution exposure. The WHO also recently reported that as urban air quality declines, the risk of stroke, heart disease, lung cancer, and chronic and acute respiratory diseases, including asthma, increases for the people who live in them.

5 Like many environmental problems, air pollution has a transboundary dimension. According to a report by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the deliberate destruction of biomass through unsustainable land-clearing practices has resulted in transboundary air pollution, or haze as it is commonly known, and is linked to severe impacts on health and the environment in Southeast Asia. Overcoming haze pollution is also directly relevant to achieving the 2030 Agenda, specifically in promoting sustainable management of forests, preventing land degradation and biodiversity losses and well-being for all.

Hence, both domestic actions as well as international cooperation are essential to overcome the scourge of air pollution.

Singapore's Efforts in Addressing Haze

6 Transboundary haze pollution has plagued Southeast Asia for many years. It affects the economies and puts at risk the health of millions of people in the region. Hence, Singapore works actively with other countries in the region to mitigate haze. Regionally, Singapore is a Party to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution, which is a regional instrument that requires Parties to develop and implement measures to prevent and control burning activities that may result in haze. Singapore collaborates with our ASEAN neighbours on fire prevention and mitigation and capacity building projects to keep the haze at bay. We believe that a timely and coordinated response will be more effective in the region's efforts to mitigate land and forest fires.

7 Domestically, we have also taken steps to address transboundary haze. We enacted the Transboundary Haze

Pollution Act in 2014 to prosecute errant companies and individuals whose actions cause haze pollution in Singapore, regardless of whether the haze comes from within or outside of Singapore. Singapore will not tolerate the actions of entities that harm the environment and put at risk the health of our people. Such actions include irresponsible burning and clearing of land that harms the environment for short-term profit.

8 Beyond governments, civil society and businesses play an important role in combatting haze. Civil societies are a key enabler to foster an informed consumer movement and strengthen support for sustainably-sourced products. This can influence consumer's choices, which in turn shapes industry practices. Likewise, businesses need to enhance the transparency and accountability of their supply chains, which would attract consumers and investors to support their businesses. International platforms, such as UNEA, can thus enhance such efforts by supporting and promoting sustainable consumption and production.

Conclusion

9 To conclude, regional and international cooperation and action are essential to make progress on the 2030 Agenda. Singapore is ready to devote our efforts to ensure that we have an effective and productive session at UNEA-2. Thank you.