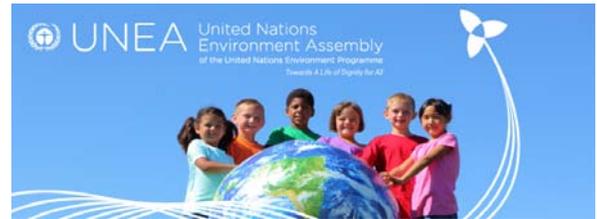




UNEA

United Nations Environment Assembly
of the United Nations Environment Programme

Towards A Life of Dignity for All



Remarks

By

**H.E. Ms. OYUN SANJAASUREN,
PRESIDENT OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY OF UNEP**

Under

First Session of the High Level Segment

10AM-1PM

26 June, Thursday

**The First United Nations Environment Assembly of the
United Nations Environment Programme**

Monday, 23 June 2014

11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Conference Room 2

Your Excellency Mr Uhuru Kenyatta, President of the Republic of Kenya

Your Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco

Your Excellency Mr John Ashe, President of the UN General Assembly

Honourable Ministers,

Distinguished delegates,

Mr. Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP

Ladies and Gentlemen

[UNEA]

1. I am very pleased to be at this first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, taking place in the dynamic metropolis of Nairobi, around the same season as of one nature's greatest spectacles – the Great Migration.
2. I pay tribute to the Republic of Kenya for generously sharing with us one of the world's greatest environmental activists – the late Nobel Laureate Prof. Wangari Maathai – and for hosting the United Nations Environment Programme for over 40 years. Now, with the first ever United Nations Environment Assembly as well, Nairobi truly is the Environment Capital of World.
3. UNEA is a historic event for all of us, set to define not only the future of the United Nations Environment Programme, but to support further the institutional framework and programmatic platform for sustainable development and set the environmental agenda for the world to follow.

[CHALLENGES]

4. We all acknowledge that the world today faces an increasing number of challenges, which are complex in nature and require firm, concerted and coordinated efforts to resolve.
5. The coming years will be critical for achieving progress in tackling climate change and advancing the post-2015 development agenda issues, but crucially there is a growing understanding that environmental conservation is an enabling factor for growth and not an impediment to it. In this sense, the environmental rule of law and financing the green economy, two key topics at UNEA this week, are of paramount importance.

6. By the end of this century, the world is projected to reach 11 billion people. If our consumption patterns and ever increasing demand for food, energy and water continue, we will require far more resources than the planet has to offer. Humanity must take lessons from history, and be more responsible and proactive to shift to the sustainable consumption and production that will allow our economies and societies to grow, and grow sustainably and within the means of the planet while creating equity and human wellbeing.
7. The launch of UNEP *2014 Year Book*, which tracks the progress—and all too often lack of progress—of major issues flagged as emerging over the last decade, reconfirms the critical role that the environment plays in maintaining and improving the health of people and ecosystems. Clean air in our cities prevents the premature death and illness of millions and can save society trillions of dollars.

[HLS THEMES]

Distinguished delegates

8. At the High Level Segment of UNEA starting today, we have the opportunity to make a concrete contribution to this change by deliberating in our Ministerial dialogues on important issues such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the post-2015 development agenda, as well as on the Illegal Trade in Wildlife and Timber.
9. The depletion of natural resources, such as those caused by poaching and the illegal timber trade jeopardizes the livelihoods of those who depend on the Earth's natural resources and threatens sustainable development. We heard this week that environmental crime is now worth over \$200 billion each year, depriving developing economies of crucial finance and increasing insecurity by putting money in the pockets of criminals, terrorists and militia groups.
10. Major priorities to tackle these growing challenges include maintaining political momentum to support international cooperation in the fight against the illegal trade in wildlife and timber at all levels, providing support to judicial and enforcement measures, and awareness-raising.
11. UNEP has pioneered the work to help define the concept of green economy. At Rio+20, green economy was recognized as an important tool for addressing sustainable development. We now need to come up with concrete policies and solutions and mobilize all our efforts to deliver those policies.
12. Back in my own country we have a long and rich nomadic history in which our people have lived for centuries in a lifestyle intimately intertwined with the natural world.

13. Mongolia is an example of a country that has not contributed much to the causes of climate change and yet is experiencing its disproportionate impact. The average temperature in Mongolia has risen by 2.1°C – this is three times more intense warming than the world average. As a direct effect, desertification, pasture degradation and melting permafrost are threatening our nomadic pastoralism.
14. We, however, don't want just to complain and sit idle. We want to be the part of the solution. In this context, I am pleased to inform you that the Mongolian Parliament recently approved the country's Green Development Strategy and we have both public support and genuine political will to change our trajectory to a greener path.
15. Environmental, social, and economic opportunities, when combined, can have mutually reinforcing outcomes for sustainable development. Through integration of the three dimensions it will be possible to achieve the necessary transformative change and bring many of the issues we face under the umbrella of sustainable development.
16. The ongoing discussions on the Post-2015 development agenda and SDGs will need to take into account universal concerns with a universal ambition through common but differentiated responsibilities, recognizing that each country starts with a different baseline of challenges, needs, priorities, and response capabilities.

[CONCLUSION]

Distinguished delegates,

17. Let us not forget the raised level of expectations as we take the first steps in moving ahead together as part of the UN Environment Assembly. I hope that the outcomes of UNEA can help strengthen and upgrade UNEP as the leading global environmental authority that truly sets the global environmental agenda.
18. We have a great responsibility to promote environmental sustainability and to achieve sustainable development for all of us and our future generations - "Towards a Life of Dignity for All".
19. Working together with this shared sense of purpose will help us all deliver on the expectations of the international community, at this historic occasion of the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly.

Thank you.