

# Towards a Pollution-Free Planet

A guide for Member States  
looking to support the  
flagship campaign of  
the third UN Environment  
Assembly





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## Introduction

The third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly will take place in Nairobi from 4 to 6 December 2017 under the theme “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet”. The choice of pollution as the theme sends a strong signal that Member States wish to use the Assembly to deliver concrete solutions to this urgent challenge.

In the run-up to the Assembly, UN Environment is leading a global campaign towards a pollution-free planet. This citizen-focused campaign aims to inspire millions of people to reduce their pollution footprint and call for leaders to take decisive action on pollution.

Member States are critical to driving this message. As part of your commitment to the Assembly and its theme, we invite you to engage in this campaign, adapting it to your national context and using it to tackle pollution in your country and around the world.

**“Urgent action is our responsibility... Our goal, collectively, must be a pollution-free planet.”**

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**Dr. Edgar E. Gutiérrez-Espeleta,  
Minister of Environment and  
Energy of Costa Rica  
and President of the 2017  
UN Environment Assembly**



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# Dimensions of Pollution

## Air

Air pollution is the single biggest environmental health risk, causing roughly 7 million deaths annually. Short-lived pollutants are responsible for about one third of deaths from stroke, chronic respiratory disease and lung cancer and one quarter of deaths from heart attack. These pollutants are also contributing to global warming, lowering labour productivity, and increasing food insecurity around the world.

## Freshwater

In developing countries, 70 per cent of industrial waste is dumped untreated into water, polluting local water supplies. Around the world, some 2 billion tons of human waste are disposed of in water courses every day. All that pollution has significant health impacts: 4,000 children die every day from diseases caused by polluted water and inadequate sanitation. Each year, some 1.8 million people (mostly children) are killed by diarrhoea alone.

## Land and Soil

Land and soil are polluted primarily by household waste and industrial activity. Industrial chemicals such as herbicides and pesticides are also important sources of land and soil pollution. Industrial accidents and extended industrial mismanagement, especially in the extractive industry, can pollute enormous areas of land. Contaminated land can lead to contaminated crops and produce, which have direct impacts on human health.

## Coastal and Marine

Marine pollution can be found in all the world's oceans and seas, even in the most remote areas. The continuous growth in the amount of solid waste that humans produce, and the very slow rate at which that waste degrades, are together leading to a gradual increase in the amount litter found at sea, on the seafloor and along coastlines around the world.

## Chemical

Humans use over 100,000 different chemical elements and compounds, including lead, mercury, cadmium and persistent organic pollutants (POPs). If not managed properly, chemicals can have severe impacts on human health, causing acute poisoning, cancers, birth defects, neurological disorders, hormone disruption and more. Chemical pollution also depletes the ozone layer and disrupts delicate species and ecosystems.

## Waste

Nearly 30 per cent of the food produced worldwide is lost or wasted every year. This waste contributes to biodiversity loss through habitat change, overexploitation, pollution and climate change. About 41.8 million tonnes of e-waste were generated in 2014, almost 25 per cent more than 2010. In Kenya alone, an average of 3,000 tonnes of computers, monitors, printers, batteries and other kinds of e-waste is generated annually.





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# 12 Ways to Engage

## How Member States can support the Pollution-Free Planet campaign

1. Submit Op-Eds on pollution to national newspapers, written under the name of your environment minister or Head of State.
2. Announce your Government's pollution-beating commitments to the public and national media in the run-up to the Assembly.
3. Mobilize cities to act on pollution.
4. Engage national celebrities to call for leadership on pollution and inspire individuals to reduce their pollution footprint.
5. Use social media to drive engagement. Conduct photo competitions on Instagram or Facebook; host Twitter or Facebook chats on pollution; post videos that showcase pollution-beating actions; or organize car-free days or beach clean-ups. Share all your activities using the #BeatPollution hashtag.
6. Travel to Nairobi with national journalists. Support media field trips that highlight pollution issues and arrange interviews and briefings on national pollution issues.
7. Call on your citizens to sign the Clean Planet Charter and make pollution-beating commitments via the Environment Assembly's online platform.
8. Encourage state broadcasters to give special prominence to pollution, raising awareness and highlighting opportunities to act.
9. Convene town hall meetings in which citizens have the chance to tell lawmakers how pollution is affecting their lives.
10. Engage civil society in spreading the word on pollution, providing them with background information and communication tools.
11. Engage with UN Environment's campaigns on air pollution, marine pollution, and lead paint. (Find more details below.)
12. Share all your achievements with UN Environment's Communication Division, so that we can announce and showcase them.





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# Campaign Materials

The Environment Assembly digital platform ([www.unep.org/environmentassembly](http://www.unep.org/environmentassembly)) lies at the heart of the Pollution-Free Planet campaign. Here, visitors can sign the Clean Planet Charter, make specific pollution-beating commitments, and share their stories of how pollution has affected their lives. Social media materials and messaging are ready to be downloaded and adapted to your national contexts. You can find those assets here: [\[trello board link\]](#).

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## Related Campaigns

You can also support global action on pollution by engaging with UN Environment's campaigns on oceans, air and lead paint. At the links below, you can access campaign products and tap into wide networks of Governments, companies, grassroots groups, communities and individuals who are engaging on these issues.

**Clean Seas**  
[cleanseas.org](http://cleanseas.org)

**Breathe Life**  
[breathelife2030.org](http://breathelife2030.org)

**Lead in Paint Alliance**  
[www.unep.org/chemicalsandwaste/what-we-do/technology-and-metals/lead/global-alliance-eliminate-lead-paint](http://www.unep.org/chemicalsandwaste/what-we-do/technology-and-metals/lead/global-alliance-eliminate-lead-paint)

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## Contacts

Our team is eager to help you strategize and adapt the Pollution-Free Planet campaign to your national context. Please feel free to get in touch.

**UN Environment HQ**  
Naysán Sahba  
[communication.director@unep.org](mailto:communication.director@unep.org)

**Africa**  
Mohamed Atani  
[mohamed.atani@unep.org](mailto:mohamed.atani@unep.org)

**Europe**  
Isabelle Valentiny  
[isabelle.valentiny@unep.org](mailto:isabelle.valentiny@unep.org)

**Latin America**  
Maria Amparo Lasso  
[maria.lasso@unep.org](mailto:maria.lasso@unep.org)

**West Asia**  
Marie Daher  
[marie.daher@unep.org](mailto:marie.daher@unep.org)

**North America**  
Laura Fuller  
[laura.fuller@unep.org](mailto:laura.fuller@unep.org)

**Asia Pacific**  
Satwant Kaur  
[satwant.kaur@unep.org](mailto:satwant.kaur@unep.org)

