

Second Joint Preparatory Retreat of the Bureaux
of the UN Environment Assembly and
the Committee of Permanent Representatives
9 – 10 June 2017
Hotel Villa Caletas (Pacífico Central)
Puntarenas, Costa Rica

**Note by the Secretariat on the proposed initial interventions – Background report “Towards a
Pollution-Free Planet”**

The Secretariat submits a note on proposed initial interventions on the Executive Directors Background Report “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet”. The Secretariat, suggests that the joint bureaux meeting consider the items under Agenda item 5: Main Recommendations from the Background Document on Pollution, at the Second Joint Preparatory Retreat of the Bureaux of the UN Environment Assembly and the Committee of Permanent Representatives, to be held on 9 – 10 June 2017.

Note on proposed initial interventions – Background document “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet”

The background document for UN Environment Assembly 3 “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet” is currently being drafted, with inputs and contributions from Multilateral Environmental Agreements and UN Agencies, as well as experts from the GEO process and from Major Groups and Stakeholders. The draft will be communicated for comments and inputs from Member states and Stakeholders on 26 June for a period of 3 weeks.

Section 1: Evidence of a polluted planet: the science, impacts and economic costs

Based on the GEO regional reports and other sources, this section looks at the main following pollution areas: air; marine and coastal; land and soil; freshwater, as well as cross-cutting sources constituted by harmful chemicals and waste. It provides an analysis of the main state, trends, and impact analysis per pollution area, based on the available data and evidence, as well as elements with regards to vulnerability of specific segments of the population, including gender. It also highlights economic costs of inaction.

Section 2: Towards a Pollution-Free Planet: Agenda 2030 and Multilateral Environmental Agreements

This section provides an overview of how pollution themes are reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals and Multilateral Environmental Agreement, indicating how addressing pollution is contributing to achieving multiple Sustainable Development Goals. It highlights examples of success stories in tackling some specific pollution sources (e.g. Montreal protocol, removal of lead in fuel), providing key figures demonstrating the multiple benefits of action to tackle pollution.

The analysis of these success stories point to some key lessons indicating the need for strengthened multi-stakeholder governance: 1) Strong science-policy- society interface; 2) Multilateral and regional agreements complemented by more light-footed initiatives; 3) Engagement of diverse actors and stakeholders early on; 4) Engagement of business and industry in shaping and implementing solutions; 5) Integrated innovations to support the transition period and provide social safety nets and job opportunities.

Section 3: A Framework for Transition to a Pollution-Free Planet

Based on the analysis of the 2 first sections, the following main issues are identified:

- a) Inadequate awareness, data & information on pollution sources, pathways, impacts, alternatives;
- b) Poor regulatory & institutional functioning and absence of infrastructure to manage and control pollution
- c) Limited finance & industry leadership on pollution matters
- d) Limited understanding of pollution’s social dimension
- e) Limited capacity, knowledge sharing on what has worked, funding and relevant technologies

- f) Mispricing and invisibility of ecosystem values, and absence of internalization of pollution costs in decision making
- g) Behavior of citizens and non-recognition that choices have pollution consequences

These main gaps require attention both system wide and targeted to the pollution areas through transformative actions and enablers.

Transformative action to shift the economy include: 1) finance and investments; 2) innovations and technology; 3) production and supply chains; 4) city level actions: sectoral integration to tackle pollution; and 5) sustainable consumption practices. They need to be supported by **key enablers to correct market & policy failures and facilitate change**, including:

- a) Evidence-Based Decision-Making
- b) Enhanced Governance
- c) Economic Instruments
- d) Education for Change

While these transformative actions and enablers are aiming at addressing pollution in a preventive manner, some key targeted interventions are needed to minimize and manage pollution as well as remove legacy pollutants. Targeted interventions currently being defined, looking at 1) what needs to be done on a priority basis in each area; 2) what has worked in countries that have managed to address pollution; 3) expert advice and feedback from regional consultations; and 4) behavioral insights from previous interventions in the risk area. While this is work in progress, potential targeted interventions may include:

Air Pollution

- a) Establishment and enforcement of advanced vehicles emissions and fuel standards (e.g. at least Euro 4 level) need to be established and enforced; Addition of electric vehicles only to fleets as of 2030.
- b) Shift to cleaner coal- and gas-fired power plants, and increasingly to non-polluting renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and tidal
- c) Expansion of natural, petroleum gas or biogas for cooking, along with cleaner cook-stoves to reduce household air pollution

Water pollution

- a) Provision of clean water and toilets for improved sanitation
- b) Investment in low-cost technologies for the management of wastewater. Design/access to appropriate technologies and innovative solutions to transform wastewater to valuable products

Land pollution

- a) Identification and remediation of highly contaminated sites in densely populated areas
- b) Expansion of market availability of new fertilizer formulations that enhance plant uptake efficiency (reduce excess/leakage and soil mining/degradation)
- c) Increase of use of natural alternatives to fertilizers and pesticides
- d) Improvement in nutrient use efficiency in crop and animal production

Marine and coastal pollution

- a) Phasing- out of single use-plastics; Upgrade/modification of manufacturing processes around plastics in order to reduce_packaging and phase out non-recoverable plastic materials

Chemicals and waste

- a) Commitment to minimize waste, mandate collection and separation
- b) Elimination of open-burning of waste
- c) Reduction of exposure from lead pollution taking into account national priorities (e.g. battery recycling, pottery and paint) and establishment and enforcement of relevant legal limits by 2020 in order to eliminate lead pollution by 2030
- d) Phasing out of the production and use of asbestos
- e) Acceleration of the production and use of mercury-free products (e.g. medical devices, lamps, batteries)
- f) Identification of pollution/ chemicals-related hotspots (e.g. chemical stockpiles, polluted sites) to decontaminate them and minimize exposure.
- g) Extend the use of products through sustainable design, maintenance and upgrades and recovery of broken products
- h) Provision of reliable and effective consumer information, especially on the presence of chemicals in products.