



Toxic Remnants of War Network comments on the Draft Outline Document for the Ministerial Outcome Document of the 2017 UN Environment Assembly: “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet”

Background

The Toxic Remnants of War Network is a civil society network working to reduce the humanitarian and environmental impact of pollution generated by conflict and military activities. The Network supports the development of a stronger standard of environmental and civilian protection before, during and after armed conflicts.

Armed conflicts generate pollution; they create and sustain the conditions that allow polluting practices to flourish, and they severely degrade the capacity of national authorities to address health and environmental threats.

Conflict pollution and the toxic remnants of war are a common feature of international and non-international armed conflicts, yet remain under-addressed by the international community. Minimising their generation, dealing with their legacy, and tackling their impact on human health and ecosystems must be part of a concerted effort to move towards the goal of a pollution free planet.

In this respect, an initial and vital transformative action would be to improve the current informal systems of monitoring of pollution risks from both conflicts, and disasters, and to strengthen the currently ad hoc systems of response. (See transformative actions below). Enhanced monitoring would not only inform more timely response to pollution incidents from disasters and conflicts, and in so doing reduce the impact of pollutants on human health and the environment, but would also serve to help raise awareness of environmental damage during armed conflicts, in line with UNEA-2's resolution on the *Protection of the environment in areas affected by armed conflicts* (UNEP/EA.2/Res.15). The resolution also invited States to cooperate on preventing, minimising and mitigating the negative impacts of armed conflicts on the environment.

Our proposed language inclusion on pollution risks from disasters and conflicts is highlighted in red below:

Transformative Steps and Actions:

- Reduce all waste, through increased reuse and recycling of materials, innovation, and improved transfer of and access to clean technologies;
- Work with the private sector to identify and implement market based solutions and alternatives to end all forms of pollution;
- Improve the health of the environment and ecosystems, and the health of people everywhere, including through stronger, integrated, and coherent policies and laws to reduce pollution, including standards for air, land and water quality based on scientific evidence and data;
- Strengthen the implementation and enforcement of environmental laws and policies through capacity building and institutional strengthening, including monitoring systems;
- Eliminate major sources of marine litter, such as microplastics and the excessive, wasteful usage of single-use plastic by 202X;
- Accelerate efforts to achieve the sound management of chemicals and wastes, including eliminating lead in paint by 202X;
- Reduce, by half, the amount of untreated wastewater entering water bodies by 202X;
- Substantially improve air quality in cities to within healthy levels for human consumption by 202X;

- **Strengthen the monitoring and response systems for pollution caused by disasters and conflicts.**
- Work with the local governments of the world towards promoting sustainable models of urban development that address, in an integrated manner, cleaner and livable cities;
- Significantly expand the application and distribution in all countries of the best available science and technologies available towards combating the threat of pollution in all its forms;
- Expand existing and create new multi-stakeholder partnerships, bringing together Governments, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations system and the people of the world.