

Comments of the African Group on the Draft UNEA3 Ministerial Declaration (version released on 21 September 2017)

- 1- The draft declaration includes various references to factual data, especially in the second paragraph. While the African Group welcomes the annexed sources document, it notes that many of the sources it includes are independent research papers and non-UN sources. The Group is of the view that a ministerial declaration is a political document that should outline clear views and commitments taken on part of the participating ministers, and should not be primarily focused on reciting factual figures that belong mainly in scientific reports. Therefore, the Group believes that figures should be kept to the minimum, and when used be cited exclusively from reports prepared by the United Nations and its agencies.

- 2- In paragraph 3, the Group is concerned about the reference to “all forms of conflict” in relation to inflicting environmental damage. The Group is of the view that “all forms of conflict” is a vague term that could be widely interpreted to include any other form of political or social processes that do not necessarily constitute a conflict nor have a negative effect on the environment. Thus, the Group believes that it would be crucially important to qualify the reference to conflicts in this paragraph as “armed conflicts” and delete the phrase “all forms of conflict”. The paragraph should read as follows: “... ***And also note with concern that armed conflict can inflict damage on the environment...***”.

- 3- While the Group acknowledges the commitments made in the draft declaration with regard to fighting pollution and striving to address specific sectors to that end, it notes with grave concern that the draft does not refer in any way, shape or form to the agreed upon principles on enabling developing and least developed Member States to address these issues, particularly through technology transfer, capacity development, finance and others. The Group is of the view that should any commitments on the ministerial level be feasible, it needs to be balanced with a clear and outspoken commitment, on the same level, to provide the above-mentioned means of implementation. It is also noted that no references are made to other Rio+20 established principles on the historical responsibilities of various Member States towards addressing the ongoing environmental challenges.

- 4- Considering the above point, the Group would find it increasingly difficult to accept the references made to specific sectors in paragraphs 6 and 9 of the draft declaration, and would prefer to maintain the general nature of the document without giving more emphasis to one sector or another.

- 5- Paragraph 12 of the draft declaration requests the Executive Director of UNEP to “engage interested stakeholders in establishing a common platform of action on pollution” for consideration during the next session of the Assembly. The Group is of the view that such a request would be misplaced in the ministerial declaration, and that should such platform be needed, it must be requested by Member States in a separate resolution negotiated by Member States and adopted by the Assembly. This would ensure that sufficient discussion was given to the idea and that the details of the constitution, operation, management and expected outcome of such a platform are thoroughly considered and fleshed out in an inclusive and comprehensive manner.

- 6- In its current formulation, paragraph 12 does not provide any clarity on the above. The Group believes that given the limited time until the Assembly, if such a platform was deemed to be needed, it should be carried over to the intersessional period after the third Session, where Member States would be provided with sufficient time to fully digest and comprehend the necessity or un必要性 of the proposal. The Group thus believes that paragraph 12 should be deleted.