

Zero Draft of the Ministerial Outcome Document of the 2017 UN Environment Assembly “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet”

In South America, young mothers like Maria handle raw mercury in artisan gold mines, because it is the only way to make a living. In North America, families like the Kellogg’s relocate to areas where their children can play outside without fear of an asthma attack. In Europe, schools like Fatima Gunic hoist flags in the playground to monitor air pollution. In Africa, communities like Ogoniland try to survive in land saturated by oil pollution. In the Middle East, residents in places like Khuzestan must breathe through the growing number of sand and dust storms swallowing their homes and closing their schools. In Asia, people like 13 year old Lim Seong-joon are crippled because of chemicals being used incorrectly. **And in the Pacific, many of the remote islands have high density of anthropogenic marine debris carried from elsewhere by water currents.** In fact, during the next hour, another 1,500 people around the world will needlessly die from environmental causes.

We, the world’s ministers of environment, gathered for the Third Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, declare that this cannot and will not continue. We commit to securing a pollution free future for our people and planet. And we commit to working with **stakeholders** to rapidly explore and implement **appropriate solutions** to end the pollution of our air, soil, freshwater and oceans.

As the representatives of 193 nations, we believe that, regardless of gender or culture, faith or wealth, no child should die from dirty water or poor hygiene. Yet today, nearly 2,000 children below the age of five will do just that. No one should choke because they walk down a street or cook a hot meal in their home. Yet every day, 9 out of 10 of us will continue to breathe air that is unsafe and 20,000 people will die because of it. No community should be contaminated by hazardous chemicals and waste. Yet of the 130,000 chemicals on the market, only a fraction is properly tested, labelled or tracked. No ecosystem should be so damaged by consumer choices that it ceases to function properly. Yet every year, we dump up to 13 million tonnes of plastic in our oceans and 50 million tonnes of electronic waste on our land. No one should be left behind as we strive to deliver the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development or other international agreements. Yet it is still the poorest and most vulnerable people in society who are disproportionately affected; often paying the price for the action of the wealthiest.

This Assembly agrees that everyone on this planet has an equal right to live in a clean environment, with access to safe **water and food, and clean air.** These are the most precious of natural resources. Any threat to them is a threat to our health, our society, our economy, our security and our very survival. Pollution is not new, but with the population expected to reach 10 billion people by 2050, these self-imposed threats have never been greater or more preventable.

However, we also agree that with leadership, determination, collaboration, knowledge and technology, our options for turning these threats into opportunities are increasing just as fast. The transition to a pollution free planet is not only achievable, but can help tackle poverty, improve health, reduce global warming, build peace, protect human rights, create jobs and drive economic growth. We must recapture and reinvest the 300 tonnes of gold buried in electronic waste every year; **the \$16 billion economic cost of the Southeast Asian wildlife fires in 2015 caused by uncontrolled biomass and peat burning,** **the \$100 billion in plastic packaging being thrown away;** **the \$1 trillion economic loss from exposing children to lead in paint;** and the \$5 trillion spent on healthcare because of air pollution. To do so, we must

Comment [Singapore1]: It is useful to have an example for the Pacific to be representative of the Asia and the Pacific region. It is also important to draw attention to transboundary pollution, as it is a form of pollution that needs to be addressed. In this regard, a general illustration of transboundary marine pollution in the Pacific would be ideal to help complete the analogy of pollution in this para.

Comment [Singapore2]: In reality, it is not possible to work with “every possible” stakeholder, hence the proposed amendments to keep it simple, i.e. “work with stakeholders”.

Comment [Singapore3]: In reality it is not impossible to “implement every possible solutions”. Therefore we propose to tweak the language to “implement appropriate solutions”.

Comment [Singapore4]: Proposed edits for flow and precision of language.

Comment [Singapore5]: This is cited from World Bank’s research and also reflected in the GEO Regional Assessment for Asia and the Pacific (pg 47).

dramatically scale up and accelerate the solutions that countries, cities, businesses and individual citizens are already using.

Therefore, we acknowledge the magnitude of threats and opportunities reported in *Towards a Pollution Free Planet* serve and commit to preventing, mitigating and managing pollution in every form by:

- Supporting the development, collation and use of reliable scientific data. This includes better multidisciplinary indicators; more efficient data gathering and monitoring; easier access to and wider availability of information; and an increase in awareness raising and knowledge sharing. This will promote evidence based decision making in the public and private sectors, effective standard setting by all stakeholders and greater participation by citizens from all walks of life.
- Targeting pollutants with focused environmental agreements and tailored action. This will be achieved in two ways. Either by developing global policy to prevent, reduce and control pollutants, particularly at source, where the science is clear, but actions do not yet exist. Or by increasing research on pollutants where the impact is not yet clear.
- Cultivating economic productivity and job creation by using incentives to increase innovation and the uptake of new technology. This make it easier for producers and consumers to rethink, reuse, recycle, recover and remake any products, materials and services.
- Nurturing integrated urban development to create more livable villages, towns and cities, which thrive in harmony with the surrounding environment. This includes accelerating the sound management of chemicals and waste, encouraging responsible lifestyle choices, prioritizing access to clean energy and transport, and leveraging the power of big data.
- Promoting fiscal incentives to stimulate systemic and behavioural changes. This includes internalising the true cost of pollution including its externalities in financial decisions and redirecting investments from the short-term profits of polluting activities to the more sustainable profits of greener alternatives.
- Strengthening and enforcing more integrated policies, regulations and laws. This will be achieved by supporting institutions and building capacity; bolstering monitoring and accountability systems; and sharing best practices, standards, policy instruments and tools.
- Creating and expanding partnerships across the United Nations, as well as with governments, the private sector, academia, civil society and individual citizens. This includes emphasizing enormous potential of partnerships between different stakeholders among developing nations.
- Affirming the importance of intergovernmental cooperation and strengthening it at all levels to address and reduce the negative impacts of pollution that are transboundary in nature. This can include promoting regional dialogue to discuss environmental issues, including those that have transboundary impacts.

As ministers of the environment, we recognize that we are accountable for delivering on those commitments. As just a few of the 7.5 billion people living here, we urge our fellow citizens to recognize that every one of us is responsible for making that happen. And, as mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, sisters and brothers, friends, colleagues, neighbours and communities, we cannot overstate the

Comment [Singapore6]: We need to stress the importance of addressing pollution at source in order to achieve the vision of a pollution-free planet.

Comment [Singapore7]: To calculate the real cost of population, it is important to consider the externalities.

Comment [Singapore8]: The language that we are proposing is also referenced from the senior officials report and the Chair's summary of the 2nd Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific in Sep 2017.

To provide the rationale, while pollution is generated at a specific location, it might not remain there. It can be carried by anthropogenic means, such as cargo shipments, as well as natural means, such as air and water. As such, pollution originating from one area may affect the environment of other areas, including across countries. When this happens, it is imperative that there is close coordination and communication between source and destination of the pollution. Cooperation among countries is therefore key to tackling environmental issues in a holistic manner.

Comment [Singapore9]: This language is taken from the Ministerial Declaration of the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and Pacific in Sep 2017, and provides a good illustration on what it means to strengthen intergovernmental cooperation in addressing transboundary pollution.

need to make it happen quickly. In the time it has taken you to read this declaration, some 200 people have died from environmentally modifiable factors; nearly half of that just from breathing.

Therefore, we warmly welcome the resolutions adopted at the Third Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly. We applaud the many pledges from diverse stakeholders that address critical environmental challenges. And we restate our commitment to work towards a pollution free planet for present and future generations.