

Ministerial declaration of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its third session

Tentative title: “Towards a pollution-free planet”

REV-2, 30 November 2017

We the world’s ministers of the environment, believe that every one of us should be able to live in a clean environment. Any threat to **our environment** is a threat to our health, our society, our ecosystems, our economy, our security, our well-being and our very survival. That threat is already upon us: pollution is cutting short the lives of millions of people every year.

We gather at the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly to work towards a pollution-free planet, with political, scientific, **private sector**, and civil society leaders. We believe it is imperative that we alert people everywhere to the following.

1. Every day, 9 out of 10 of us breathe air that is unsafe and 20,000 people will die because of itⁱ, and nearly 2,000 children below the age of five will die from dirty water and poor hygieneⁱⁱ. Women and girls continue to be disproportionately affected, whether it be from cooking with dirty fuel or walking further to find safe water. Every year we dump up to 13 million tonnes of plastic in our oceansⁱⁱⁱ and 50 million tonnes of electronic waste on our land^{iv}, causing severe damage to ecosystems, livelihoods and our health.
2. We believe that it is both inexcusable and preventable that tens of thousands of chemicals are used in everyday objects and applied in the field without proper testing, labelling or tracking. Far too many communities either lack information about the chemicals and hazardous substances they use or are exposed to, or the capacity to manage them safely.
3. However, we also believe that knowledge and technological solutions to reduce pollution already exist, though many stakeholders have yet to explore and implement the many opportunities available. We are encouraged by the numerous success stories of countries, cities and businesses addressing air, soil, freshwater and marine pollution issues. Recent examples include the adoption of the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol and the entry into force of the Minamata Convention on Mercury.
4. As countries **address** the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted in 2015 and the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and other relevant multilateral agreements and conventions we acknowledge the links between pollution, climate change, biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation. We further acknowledge that pollution disproportionately affects the poor and the vulnerable. Tackling pollution will contribute to sustainable development by fighting poverty, improving health, creating decent jobs, improving life below water and on land, and reducing global warming.
5. We are concerned by the legacy of damage and pollution that armed conflict causes to the environment, often delaying recovery, undermining the achievement of sustainable development and threatening the health of people and ecosystems.
6. We are also concerned that unsustainable land use and management can lead to soil degradation and pollution and creates phenomena such as **forest and biodiversity loss**, sand and dust storms, **increasing** wildfires, and other **undesirable effects that** pose a great challenge to sustainable development.
7. We are convinced that determination, collaboration, knowledge generation and sharing, innovation, efficient use of resources and clean technology can provide concrete solutions to tackle pollution, but that we can do more.
8. Therefore, we are determined to prevent, mitigate and manage the pollution of air, land and soil, freshwater and oceans by taking the following actions:
 - a. We will increase research and encourage the development, collation and use of reliable scientific and disaggregated data. This will include providing better multidisciplinary indicators; improving capacity for efficient gathering, verification and monitoring of data; and increasing transparency by making it easier to access such information more widely.
 - b. We will promote **science**-based decision making in the public and private sectors, effective standard setting **processes** by all stakeholders and greater participation by individuals from all walks of life.
 - c. We will target **pollution** through **tailored actions including** environmental agreements.
 - d. We will accelerate the implementation and **promote cooperation among** existing multilateral agreements, conventions, regulations and programmes to prevent, control and reduce pollution.
 - e. We will foster **inclusive and** sustainable economic productivity, innovation, job creation and environmentally sound technologies.
 - f. We will encourage sustainable lifestyles and move forward to ensure more sustainable consumption and

- production patterns, by providing reliable sustainability information to consumers, increasing education and awareness raising, and making it easier to rethink, reuse, recycle, recover and remake any products, materials and/or services and prevent and reduce waste generation.
- g. We will promote the adoption of policies and approaches **such as those** for the sound management of chemicals and waste, including the use of integrated life cycle, value chains and sustainable chemistry.
 - h. We will make the best use of science, **education**, policy links, trade, investment and innovation opportunities in order to **tackle pollution and promote sustainable development**.
 - i. We will work with local governments to encourage sustainable models of urban development.
 - j. We will promote fiscal measures such as incentives to stimulate positive changes. This will include capturing the true cost of pollution, including its externalities, in financial decisions and redirecting investment from the short-term profits of polluting activities to the more sustainable profits of environmentally sound alternatives.
 - k. We will strengthen and enforce more integrated policies, laws, and regulations. We will achieve this by supporting institutions and building **their** capacity; bolstering monitoring and accountability systems; and sharing best practices, standards, policy instruments and tools, and enhancing environmental education and training.
 - l. We will continue to develop and expand partnerships, between governments, the private sector, academia, relevant United Nations agencies and programmes, indigenous peoples and local communities, civil society and individuals.
 - m. We will promote North-South, South-South, and triangular cooperation **while recognizing that South-South cooperation is not a substitute for, but rather a complement to North-South cooperation. We will also promote** regional dialogue and coordination across the United Nations to target pollution.
9. As ministers of environment, we recognize our role in delivering these commitments and promoting coordinated action. We will focus on preventive measures and building resilience, taking account of each country's responsibilities and capacities. We will also emphasise the need for greater cooperation, through such means as capacity building, the exchange of experiences, resources and technologies, while taking into consideration the Rio Principles on Environment and Development.
 10. However, responsibility for combatting pollution does not rest with national governments alone. We need commitment **and leadership from governments and involvement and partnership** from the private sector, international organizations, civil society and individuals. Everyone has a responsibility as mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, sisters and brothers, friends, employers, colleagues, neighbours and communities.
 11. We cannot overstate the need for rapid, large-scale and co-ordinated action against pollution and applaud the [XXXX]^v pledges made so far by individuals and countries of the world on action to reduce pollution in the Beat Pollution engagement campaign.
 12. We support the actions, commitments and resolutions adopted by the UN Environment Assembly and call for their adequate and coherent implementation.
 13. We acknowledge the magnitude of challenges and opportunities **highlighted in, among others**, the report by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, *Towards a Pollution-Free Planet*^{vi}.
 14. Moving towards a pollution-free planet is a long-term endeavour. We request the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to propose a plan for implementation for our consideration.
 15. As addressing pollution is a crucial element for achieving the sustainable development goals, we will advocate for this declaration **in all relevant fora**, including at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, and we will follow up on its implementation at our next session in 2019.
 16. This is our commitment **to work towards a pollution-free planet for** the health and wellbeing of our people and the environment.

References for figures quoted in the text for members information only (to be deleted after the adoption of the document)

ⁱ World Health Organization (WHO) – WHO releases country estimates on air pollution exposure and health impact. September 2017 Available at: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2016/air-pollution-estimates/en/>.

ⁱⁱ Liu L, Johnson HL, Cousens S, Perin J, Scott S, Lawn JE, Rudan I, Campbell H, Cibulskis R, Li M, Mathers C, Black RE; Child Health Epidemiology Reference Group of WHO and UNICEF. Global, regional, and national causes of child mortality: an updated systematic analysis for 2010 with time trends since 2000. *Lancet*. 2012 Jun 9;379(9832):2151-61.

ⁱⁱⁱ Report by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, *Towards a Pollution-Free Planet*, UNEP/EA.3/25

^{iv} Baldé, C.P., Wang, F., Kuehr, R., Huisman, J. (2015), *The global e-waste monitor – 2014*, United Nations University, IAS – SCYCLE, Bonn, Germany.

^v Number of pledges received by end of Assembly to be inserted

^{vi} UNEP/EA.3/25