

New Zealand comments on the zero draft of the Ministerial declaration for the fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly – 30 November 2018

New Zealand thanks the President of the UN Environment Assembly and the UN Environment Programme for preparing the zero draft ministerial declaration of the 2019 UN Environment Assembly and wishes to provide the following comments:

- New Zealand submits that the first preambular paragraph could be shortened to make it more direct and accessible to a wider audience. We submit the following text for consideration: ***“As ministers of the environment, we recognise that we need to eradicate poverty, change patterns of production and consumption, and better manage our natural resources, in order to achieve sustainable development.”*** As a general observation, the draft declaration is heavy on “UN language”. We accept this is an unavoidable consequence of the need to carefully accommodate different Member State views and of the technical nature of the issues involved. However we would welcome consideration being given to more accessible language where possible to improve the declaration’s appeal to a wider audience.
- New Zealand subscribes to the view that ministerial declarations at UN Environment Assemblies should be agenda setting. They should include commitments for national action and for regional and international cooperation to improve global environmental outcomes. However we are not convinced that declarations need always be the vehicle for creating new global constructs and programmes such as those foreshadowed in subparagraph (a) of Main Priority 1 and subparagraphs (i) and (k) of Main Priority 2. These particular initiatives may be desirable – and at a glance New Zealand is broadly supportive of what they could achieve – but we would prefer that potential new initiatives which involve UN Environment resources be assessed in the context of Member State deliberations on UN Environment’s Programme of Work.
- For presentational reasons New Zealand suggests that consideration be given to switching Main Priorities 1 and 2 so that Main Priority 2 appears first. We support the idea of disaggregating data and digital-related solutions (Main Priority 1) from other solutions for sustainable and efficient resource management (Main Priority 2). However the solutions in Main Priority 2 are likely to resonate more with Ministers and national audiences so would benefit from appearing first – they are practical policy changes that will directly deliver improved production and consumption outcomes.
- New Zealand recommends that subparagraph (e) in Main Priority 1 be reworded as follows: ***“We empower the disclosure of ~~consumer~~ information to consumers, starting with textile and plastic products by 2025, and we develop solutions for product transparency, including labelling systems and digital product resource passports, product environment footprint, and life-cycle models.”*** The current drafting could be misunderstood to mean that consumers’ information is to be disclosed, rather than information for consumers.
- New Zealand strongly supports subparagraph (a) in Main Priority 2, which affirms a commitment to improve national resource management strategies with an integrated life-cycle perspective to achieve a resource-efficient and circular economy. Traditional waste management mechanisms

have not effectively controlled waste produced throughout the lifecycle of products and infrastructure. Investments to design out waste from products and services will significantly contribute to the achievement of sustainable consumption and production.

- Sustainable trade in agricultural products is an important contributor to global food safety and security. New Zealand would welcome a reference in subparagraph (d) in Main Priority 2 that reaffirms the global community's commitment to sustainable agricultural trade as follows: *"We target the implementation of sustainable agricultural practices, **including through agriculture trade**, to support sustainable food production through improved value generation and to ensure food safety and security."*
- Similarly, New Zealand considers that subparagraph (f) in Main Priority 2 should be strengthened to emphasise the role that sustainable trade practices play in fostering sustainable and efficient resource management to decarbonize, detoxify, decouple and enhance ecosystem resilience. New Zealand submits the following reference: *"We foster the investments in innovative solutions for enabling access to clean energy and green infrastructure, **including through trade**, and expand the use of sustainable transportation, including electro-mobility."*
- New Zealand further considers that Main Priority 2 should be further strengthened to emphasise the important role that trade agreements can play in promoting innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production. New Zealand submits a new subparagraph for Main Priority 2 as follows: *"**We support the inclusion of environment chapters in international trade agreements that include the encouragement of sustainable consumption and production.**"*
- New Zealand requests that further information be made available about the proposal foreshadowed in subparagraph (i) in Main Priority 2: *"We develop a global approach and concert our efforts for long-term funding for the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020, as an essential requirement for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda goals, to be considered at the fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly."* The practical requirements and impacts of this proposal are unclear, as is its relationship with existing global funding mechanisms such as the Global Environment Facility.
- New Zealand strongly supports subparagraph (m) in Main Priority 2 which includes a commitment to phase out environmentally harmful subsidies. Environmentally harmful subsidies such as those for fossil fuels undermine the achievement of sustainable consumption and production.