

UNEA President statement

Statement of the President of the United Nations Environment Assembly, H.E. Siim Kiisler, to the High-Level Political Forum. 16 July 2018

Excellency, Ambassador Marie Chatardová, President of the Economic and Social Council,

Excellencies, Ministers, high-level representatives and delegates,

As President of the United Nations Environment Assembly, I am grateful for the opportunity to convey key messages of the environmental agenda to the High-Level Political Forum.

The UN Environment Assembly is the world's highest-level decision-making body on environment.

The Assembly has concluded that it is essential to ensure environmental sustainability and resilience. Our shared environment is the resource base that enables both economic and social development.

The Environment Assembly prioritizes meaningful transformation towards minimizing pollution and developing buffers against natural disasters.

Pollution has reached and impacted almost every ecosystem on the planet, affecting lives, health, ecosystems and biodiversity. Adverse impacts to economies harm the poor, the disadvantaged and the vulnerable, and compromise the progress made on our sustainable development.

Ministers of the environment committed to achieving a pollution-free planet which is central to ensuring our health and well-being.

As a result of the 2017 Environment Assembly, the ministers of environment of the world offered 9 specific policy recommendations, which I am honoured to share with this Forum:

1. Increase research and encourage the development, collation and use of reliable and disaggregated data.
2. Promote science-based decision-making in the public and private sectors.
3. Invest in innovative environmental solutions to foster inclusive and sustainable economic productivity, innovation, job creation and environmentally sound technologies.
4. Encourage sustainable lifestyles and move forward in ensuring more sustainable consumption and production patterns.
5. Promote fiscal measures to invest in more environmentally sound solutions.
6. Strengthen and enforce more integrated policies, laws and regulations, support institutions and build their capacity.
7. Bolster monitoring and accountability systems, share best practices, policy instruments and tools, including environmental education and training.
8. Promote North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation across the UN.
9. Develop and expand multi-stakeholder partnerships.

The 2017 session of the Environment Assembly also requested various reports and actions to combat pollution to be delivered by its fifth session. The reports will cover

- the environmental and health impacts of pesticides and fertilizers and ways of minimizing them;

- the environmental impacts of antimicrobial resistance and the causes for spread of resistance in the environment;
- the extent of soil pollution, its risks and impacts on health, the environment and food security;
- and the progress being made by member States to implement key actions that can significantly improve air quality.

The UN Environment Programme will also assist developing countries in eliminating the use of lead in paint and in water quality monitoring, including by setting up monitoring stations, capacity-building and data management.

A very important outcome of previous Environment Assembly was also the establishment of an open-ended ad hoc expert group that will work on identifying options to address marine litter and micro plastics. It will identify potential options for continued work so that the next Assembly can determine the future direction, timing and expected outcomes on work on marine litter.

The theme of the next Assembly will focus on “Innovative solutions to environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production”.

We should decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, improve efficiency and sustainability in the use of resources, and reduce resource depletion, pollution and waste.

The fourth Environment Assembly will increase our practical understanding on how to drive innovation for the environment.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I invite all of you to attend the fourth session of our Environment Assembly, which is scheduled to take place in March 2019 in Nairobi.

Thank you!