



**Women's Major Group Input to Preliminary Draft (version 21 September 2017) of
the Ministerial Outcome Document of the 2017 UN Environment Assembly
“Towards a Pollution-Free Planet”**

9 October 2017

The Women's Major Group (WMG) was created at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The WMG is an official participant in the United Nations processes on Sustainable Development (SD) and has been active in the processes of the United Nations Environment Program since 1996. Currently, the WMG for SD has more than 1400 members, while WMG at UNEA has more than 70 members. Both are self-organised platforms that are open to all interested organisations working to promote human rights-based sustainable development with a focus on women's human rights, the empowerment of women and gender equality.

Introduction and General Comments

The WMG appreciates the President of UNEA and member states for the progress so far on the Preliminary Draft of the Ministerial Declaration released on 21st September 2017. We, however, propose several edits to the overall document.

First, it is important to reinstate the first paragraph of the zero draft that rightly illustrated grounded realities of the impacts of pollution and environmental destruction on grassroots communities - including women - from different regions of the world. We believe that putting a human face in the ministerial declaration “Towards a Pollution-Free-Planet” is indeed refreshing and in line with the spirit of a people-oriented pollution free planet, and it is unfortunate that the whole paragraph was removed from the preliminary draft.

We recognise that the draft has important elements on different issues and actions to address pollution. However, we consider it still falls short in identifying and addressing the root causes and drivers of these

problems, which is the profit-driven and business-as-usual framework of **global capitalist 'dirty' economy** as well as **corporate capture of services and resources**.

Systemic barriers to sustainable development, including large-scale **land and resource grabbing**, **unjust trade and investment agreements**, **corporate control** of forestry, agriculture and mineral resources, as well as **militarism and conflict**, are directly linked to the intensification of environmental plunder, accelerating pollution and destruction of local and natural ecosystem.

These impact food chains and peoples' health with disproportionate impact to rural, indigenous, workers, migrant, Dalits, and urban poor women. Moreover, **patriarchy** and **the rise of patriarchal authoritarian governance** that normalise the use of power, fear and ascribed gender roles has further restricted and impaired freedoms and human rights, blatantly attack environmental and woman human rights defenders. Without recognising and addressing these systemic issues, the vision towards a just and sustainable world and Pollution-Free-Planet will never be achieved.

We specifically urge Member States to strengthen the Preliminary Draft by:

- Reaffirm and operationalize the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, polluter-pays principle and intergenerational equity in decision making to address pollution.
- Adopt sustainability principles as the central paradigm that put in place policies, laws and regulations that internalise environmental, gender and social cost; including occupational safety and health policies to protect men and women workers from occupational hazard and risks
- Adopt new systems of measuring environmental health which incorporate social dimensions including sexual and reproductive health and rights; reaffirm and adopt the precautionary principle in regulations to review chemicals, pesticides, GMOs, and other toxic substances, as well as review of development projects and its' impacts to ecosystem and a strong policy on environmental and gender safeguards.
- Reaffirm human rights and women's human rights and gender equality, as well as commit to a 'just and equitable transition' to low carbon economies for workers and expand it to also address the sexual division of labor and ensure gender just and equitable transition as enshrined in the Commission of the Status of Women and the Paris Climate Agreement.
- Commit to enhance state and corporate accountability and compliance with environmental regulations. Moving towards Public-Public Partnerships instead of public private partnerships. All trade and investment agreements should be fully transparent, accountable to citizens, ensuring compliance with human rights, gender equality, and labour and environmental standards, through a legally binding corporate accountability mechanism.
- Putt greater attention and response to other pollution issues that are not mentioned in the UN Environment report, such as genetic pollution resulting from manipulation through genetic

engineering, synthetic biology and genome editing, increasing militarization and its impact on the environment. The military industrial complex is also accountable and required to follow environmental impact standards, as well as compensation for their past and present environmental crimes. New and emerging technologies that are presented as quick-fixes to the climate crisis, such as geoengineering, pose serious risks of aggravating pollution of the atmosphere through sustained injection of particles into the stratosphere and dumping of massive amounts of iron and other particles into marine environments.

- Commit to promote pro-people initiatives and actions to prevent and address pollution, including energy and resource democracy, where local people - particularly women - able to make decisions over the use of local resources. Ensure policy for and support the implementation of agroecology as well as strengthening farmers and small food producers movements to advance agroecology.
- Commit to promote people-led, scientific, traditional knowledge, proven and evidence-based solutions to the problems of pollution, and move away from technological fixes that do not address the root causes of the problem and bring adverse and unintended consequences to the environment and livelihoods.
- Commit to strengthen linkages between HLPF (the main platform for monitoring and review of the 2030 Agenda), UNEA-3 (the highest decision making body in relation to the environment) and other environmental processes. There should be a coherent approach and synergy in prevention of pollution and achieving 2030 agenda.

Text Suggestions

Preliminary draft of the ministerial outcome document

Released on 21 September 2017

- 1. Add from Zero Draft: 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. And in Asia, people like 13 year old Lim Seong-joon are crippled because of chemicals being used incorrectly. In fact, during the next hour, another 1,500 people around the world will needlessly die from environmental causes.**

2. We, the world's ministers of environment, gathered for the Third Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly to discuss a path towards a pollution-free planet. We welcome the progress that has been achieved by the international community to reduce pollution. We need to drastically accelerate our efforts if we want to secure a pollution-free planet for our ecosystems and our peoples. We commit to working with all stakeholders to rapidly explore and implement every possible solution to beat pollution in all areas, namely, air, land and soil, freshwater and oceans.
3. As the representatives of all countries, we believe that, regardless of age, gender or culture, faith or wealth, no one should die from dirty water or poor hygiene. Yet, nearly 2,000 children below the age of five will do just that every day. 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 thousands of chemicals on the market, only a fraction is properly tested, labelled or tracked. No coastal community should struggle to secure adequate dietary protein from already fragile coastal fisheries. No ecosystem should be so damaged by **corporate, State, and** 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.
4. We acknowledge the linkages between pollution, climate change, **human and animal health, human rights**, and biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation. We recognize that tackling pollution will help to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and also note with concern that all forms of conflict, particularly armed, can inflict damage on the environment, often leaving a legacy of pollution that delays recovery and threatens the health of people and ecosystems. No one should be left behind as we strive to deliver the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development or other international frameworks. Yet it is still the poorest and most vulnerable people in society who are disproportionately affected.
5. This Assembly recognizes that everyone on this planet is entitled to live in a clean environment, with safe access to clean water, air and soil. These are ~~the~~ **most precious** natural resources. Any threat to them is a threat to our health, our society, ~~our economy~~, our ecosystems, our security and our very survival. Pollution is not new, but with the global population expected to reach 10 billion people by 2050 - accompanied with a global increase in demand for resources, these **self-imposed** threats have never been greater.
6. We also acknowledge that **political will**, determination, collaboration, knowledge generation and sharing, ~~innovation and clean technology~~, **as well as legislative measures that tackle pollution at its source** ~~can help transform~~ will be vital to address these challenges ~~into opportunities~~ **and that innovation and environmentally sound, socially acceptable and economically equitable technology have the potential for positive impact.** The **just and equitable transition to low carbon economies and a vision to** a pollution-free planet is not only achievable, but can help tackle **inequalities of wealth, power and resource between and within countries and between men and women, addressing** poverty, improve health, **ensure gender equality and**

address gendered-division of labor, create decent jobs and drive **human and economic development** growth, improve life below water and on land, and reduce global warming.

7. We must recapture and reinvest the 300 tonnes of gold buried in electronic waste every year; the billions of dollars in plastic packaging being thrown away; the immense economic loss from exposing children to lead in paint; the US\$8.7 billion annual cost of intelligence quotient loss from exposure to by-products emissions of mercury, and the US\$5 trillion spent on healthcare because of air pollution.
8. Many actors have already taken the lead on this journey and have been very successful at addressing pollution. Governments have adopted targeted multilateral or regional environmental agreements that aim to address pollution in its various aspects and, if effectively implemented, they will help turn the tide on pollution. Solutions to help **prevent the introduction of pollutants**, remove **existing** pollutants, **cease production of pollutants** and detoxify our environment exist around the world. We must dramatically scale up and accelerate the solutions that countries, cities, businesses and individuals are already using to avoid risking further exposure of humans and ecosystems to existing and growing pollution.
9. We acknowledge the magnitude of challenges and opportunities identified in the United Nations Environment Programme Executive Director's Report, Towards a Pollution-Free Planet.
10. We commit to preventing, mitigating and managing the pollution of air, land and soil, freshwater and oceans by:
 - a. Supporting the development, collation and use of reliable scientific and **gender-disaggregated** data. This includes better multidisciplinary indicators; capacity for efficient data gathering and monitoring **directly from marginalized peoples, including Indigenous Peoples**; easier access to and wider availability of data and information **and information-gathering and reporting tools** ; and greater transparency and open sharing of data **with clear attribution of sources**. Promoting **the precautionary principle and** evidence-based decision making in the public and private sectors, effective standard setting by all stakeholders and greater participation by individuals from all walks of life.
 - b. Targeting pollutants through environmental agreements and tailored action. First and foremost, by implementing existing multilateral agreements, conventions and regulations to prevent, control and reduce pollution. By developing global policies to prevent, reduce and control pollutants where the science is clear, but actions do not yet exist. And by increasing research on pollutants where the impact is not yet clear.
 - c. Fostering **sustainable** economic productivity and job creation, while promoting **and supporting** ~~innovation~~ and the uptake and transfer of ~~new~~ clean and environmentally sound **practices and** technologies; **and fostering beneficial research and innovation**. Promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns, making it easier for producers and consumers to rethink, **refuse**, reuse, recycle, recover and remake any products, materials and services. **Implement HR instruments including UDHR and explanatory agreements including ILO**

Conventions, CEDAW, UN Resolutions 61/295 and 1325, requiring weaponry be recyclable and holding manufacturers accountable for collecting weaponry after their life cycle has ended.

- d. Promoting the adoption of policies and approaches for the sound management of chemicals and waste, including the use of integrated life cycle and value chain approaches and sustainable chemistry, and making best use of policy interlinkages, trade, investment, and innovation opportunities, **respecting and including traditional knowledge by supporting peace processes to end violence against traditional knowledge-holders**
 - e. Working with local governments towards promoting sustainable models of urban development that address, in an integrated manner, cleaner and more liveable cities **Promote participatory representative processes between urban and rural governments to prevent conflict and the overpowering of smaller-numbered rural rights-holding Peoples by concentrations of corruption, capital, and power in urban centers**
 - f. Promoting fiscal incentives to stimulate systemic and behavioural changes. This includes **taking actions to understanding and including and assess** the true cost of pollution, **and to ensure that such costs are internalised in all relevant** in financial **transactions decisions** and redirecting investments from the short-term profits of polluting activities to the more sustainable profits of greener alternatives.
 - g. Strengthening and enforcing more integrated policies, regulations and laws, **in particular those focusing on the prevention of pollution at its source**. This will be achieved by supporting institutions and building capacity; bolstering monitoring and accountability systems; and sharing best practices, **including the educative process of negotiating with Indigenous Peoples for their Free Prior and Informed Consent to develop**, standards, policy instruments and tools.
 - h. Creating and expanding ~~multistakeholder~~ partnerships between governments, the private sector, academia, civil society and individuals. This includes emphasizing the enormous potential of partnerships between different stakeholders. Increased coordination amongst United Nations agencies and bodies is fundamental to target pollution in all its aspects.
11. As ministers of the environment representing national governments, we recognize that we have a special role to play in delivering on these commitments, taking into account the different capacities amongst countries, and the need for greater cooperation at multilateral and bilateral levels through means such as the exchange of experiences, resources, and technologies.
12. The responsibility for combatting pollution does not rest with national governments alone; it is an international endeavour with crucial roles for the private sector, international organizations, civil society, and individuals. As just a few of the 7.5 billion people living on planet Earth, we urge our fellow citizens to recognize that everyone of us is responsible for making that happen. And, as mothers and fathers, husbands and

wives, partners, sisters and brothers, friends, colleagues, neighbours and communities, we cannot overstate the need to make it happen quickly.

13. We **are concerned** ~~recognize~~ that moving towards a pollution-free planet is a long-term endeavor, **and so commit to begin this action with urgency**. We commit ourselves to undertake and scale-up actions agreed in this Assembly and request the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to engage interested stakeholders in establishing a common platform for action on pollution for our consideration at the next session of the Assembly. We also call for a global coalition for a pollution-free planet fully aligned with the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals to inspire action and promote collaboration amongst existing frameworks.
14. We warmly welcome the resolutions adopted at the Third Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly. We applaud the many pledges announced by diverse stakeholders towards reducing pollution in our planet. We take upon ourselves to advocate for the message of this declaration in all relevant fora and to follow up on its implementation at our next session in 2019. This is our commitment to work towards a pollution-free planet.