



Climate Action Network

Input to Draft Outline for the Ministerial Outcome
Document of the
2017 UN Environment Assembly “Towards a
Pollution-Free Planet”

June 2017

Climate Action Network (CAN) is the world’s largest network of civil society organizations working together to promote government action to address the climate crisis, with more than 1100 members in over 120 countries. www.climatenetwork.org

Key recommendations to strengthen the draft outline for the 2017 UNEA Ministerial Declaration “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet”:

- Recognize the need for, and commit to implement, national policies to prevent exceeding the suggested maximum air pollution concentration by the World Health Organization (WHO air quality standards)
- Take concrete steps to significantly improve air quality, including by phasing out coal consumption, reducing oil in the transport sector, prohibiting traditional biomass for cooking and reducing other short-lived climate pollutants.
- Recognise the need to move to clean renewable energy sources and adopt energy-efficient solutions rapidly.
- Guarantee procedural rights of peoples and communities, in particular access to environmental information, public participation in decision-making and access to judicial remedies. This will enable citizens and communities to play an active role in protecting their health and the environment from air pollution.

Introduction

Climate Action Network (CAN) welcomes the opportunity to offer comments and recommendations to the draft outline that has been prepared by the President of the UN Environment Assembly for a Ministerial Declaration in Nairobi, Kenya, from 4-6 December 2017 under the overarching theme of pollution.

CAN strongly supports UNEA's vision of a pollution-free planet. However, this vision must be strengthened with an aspirational goal outlining when this should be achieved, dependent on the type of pollution.

According to the World Health Organization and the International Energy Agency, indoor and outdoor air pollution combined is the deadliest pollution worldwide and unhealthy environments contribute to the deaths of one in four children under five years. Air pollution kills as many as eight million people prematurely across the globe annually but mostly in developing countries. **Four million premature deaths are attributable to outdoor air pollution, caused mostly by burning fossil fuels, primarily oil products and coal, which are the same products causing climate change.**

Therefore, in order to not exceed the suggested maximum air pollution concentration recommended by the WHO (WHO air quality standards), Ministers must take the following transformative steps and solutions:

- (a) Take steps to **phase out coal**, both in the power and industry sector, and replace it with clean renewables while also increasing energy efficiency. Coal is responsible for at least 50% of sulfur dioxide emissions and is a major contributor to nitrous oxide and Particulate Matter (PM2.5) emissions which are three major toxic air pollutants;
- (b) **Reduce oil consumption** particularly in the transport sector and adopt electrification based on renewables and expand public transport. Oil, particularly diesel, is a major source of black carbon and also of nitrous oxide and carbon monoxide (CO) emissions;
- (c) **Prohibit the use of conventional/traditional biomass in inefficient wood stoves** in developing countries and instead move to highly-efficient biomass woodstoves and biogas digesters, and other renewable energy sources.
- (d) **Monitor ambient air quality and make air quality data publicly available** in order to provide a benchmark for air pollution reduction goals and enable individuals to protect themselves during air pollution events.
- (e) **Take steps to address other sources of short-lived climate pollutants** like black carbon, methane, tropospheric ozone and hydrofluorocarbons, some of which contribute to air pollution.

The declaration should also guarantee procedural rights of peoples and communities, in particular access to environmental information, public participation in decision making and access to judicial remedies, in order to enable citizens and communities to play an active role in protecting their health and environment from air pollution.

Please see our concrete textual suggestions to the current outline of the declaration in **red** below.

Textual suggestions:

Introduction:

- As the world's Ministers of Environment, we must be determined to take the bold and necessary steps to address pollution at every level in order to protect the health and lives of all people on this planet, the developmental aspirations of current and future generations, and the immeasurable wealth of the environment and the natural resources upon which we all depend;
- The UN Environment Programme is mandated to serve as the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda. The UN Environment Assembly is the highest-level decision-making body on the environment. Both are key in keeping the state of the environment under review and in addressing the vital environmental challenges of global and regional significance, which we are facing today, such as pollution;
- We recognize that both, our UN Environment Assembly and UN Environment Programme, cannot tackle the challenge of pollution alone and in this regard, we urge the other inter-governmental bodies, UN specialized agencies, funds and programmes, and all other stakeholders, including business leaders, to contribute towards our effort;
- We invite all governments, businesses, communities and people, and all other stakeholders to work towards a pollution-free planet by determining their own contributions and commitments to achieve our vision.
- We recognise the interlinkages between addressing pollution and realising other existing international commitments such as many of the Sustainable Development Goals and those of the the Paris Agreement.

Vision:

- Our goal, collectively, must be a pollution-free planet **well before mid-century**. Urgent action is our responsibility;
- Reducing pollution means positively transforming our world. It will help ensure that we, as humanity, make a leap towards a healthier, safer, brighter, more sustainable future, with benefits for all;
- More people will be able to leave poverty behind;
- We will protect the health of everyone on this planet, today and in the future, upholding states' respective obligations with regards to the right to health. **Drastically cutting air pollution will also help reduce the negative impacts of climate change;**
- Safer and cleaner technologies will drive our economies;
- We will transform our societies to become sustainable, resource efficient and able to support the needs of present and future generations;
- Peace, security and stability will help us promote inclusive societies, which respect human rights and gender empowerment, as well as the environment;
- **Empowering communities through access to environmental information, participation in decision making and access to judicial remedies is critical to ensure that citizens can be active actors when tackling this challenge and protecting their health and environment.**
- We will increase global, regional and national knowledge, awareness and education around pollution sources, impacts, and solutions.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Pollution affects everybody. It is a massive global challenge with consequences far beyond the environment;
- The increasing pollution of our air, water, land and seas is a major obstacle towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals set by our leaders in 2015;
- Pollution is destroying our ecosystems, affecting human health, hampering long-term economic growth and exacerbating social inequalities;
- Pollution is an individual and collective concern the world over, threatening the health and well-being of all of us;
- We welcome the many pledges and voluntary commitments being made by Governments, business and civil society as actions towards the achievement of our vision in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, and commit to take the following steps/actions;
- The solutions to reduce and eliminate pollution are available and moving onto a more sustainable path lies in our hands.

Transformative Steps and Actions:

- Reduce all waste, through **consumption reduction (especially of single-use products)**, increased reuse and recycling of materials, **closed material cycles**, innovation, and improved transfer of and access to clean technologies;
- Work with the private sector to identify and implement market based solutions and alternatives to end all forms of pollution;
- Improve the health of the environment and ecosystems, and the health of people everywhere, including through stronger, integrated, and coherent policies and laws to reduce pollution, including standards for air, land and water quality based on scientific evidence and data;
- Strengthen the implementation and enforcement of environmental laws and policies **at all levels of governance** through capacity building and institutional strengthening, including monitoring systems and the respect and promotion of procedural rights in environmental decision making;
- Eliminate major sources of marine litter, such as microplastics and the excessive, wasteful usage of single-use plastic by 202X **and strengthen the applicable legal and policy framework as appropriate;**
- Accelerate efforts to achieve the sound management of chemicals and wastes, including eliminating lead in paint by 202X;
- Reduce, by half, the amount of untreated wastewater entering water bodies by 202X;
- Substantially improve air quality in cities to **stay** within healthy levels for human consumption, by 202X, **in line with WHO quality standards and in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement by:**
 - **Phasing-out of coal globally both in power and industry sector as soon as possible and replacing it with renewables and increasing energy efficiency;**
 - **Rapidly and significantly reducing the use of oil in the transport sector and move to electrification based on renewables while also expanding public transport infrastructure;**
 - **Prohibiting the use of conventional/traditional biomass in inefficient wood stoves.**
 - **Take steps to address other sources of short-lived climate pollutants**

- Monitor ambient air quality and make air quality data publicly available in order to provide a benchmark for air pollution reduction goals and enable individuals to protect themselves during air pollution events.
- Work with the local governments of the world towards promoting sustainable models of urban development that address, in an integrated manner, cleaner and livable cities;
- Significantly expand the application and distribution in all countries of the best available science and technologies available towards combating the threat of pollution in all its forms;
- Expand existing and create new multi-stakeholder partnerships, bringing together Governments, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations system and the people of the world.