

**STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT  
ASSEMBLY (UNEA) OF UNEP, H.E. MS. OYUN SANJAASUREN, TO THE HIGH-  
LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM (HLPF)**

NEW YORK, 7 JULY 2015

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Excellencies,

I am greatly honoured to give a keynote address on the theme, “Our High Level Political Forum in the Next 15 Years”, in my capacity as President of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) of UNEP.

Both, the HLPF and UNEA were born at Rio in 2012, out of the universal realization that for achieving the future we want, substantial change in the institutional framework for sustainable development is required, including stronger international environmental governance, balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, and improved coordination within the United Nations system. The HLPF and UNEA are complementary mechanisms for policymaking, coordination of implementation and policy review, which should work together with others for the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

If the HLPF is to effectively deliver on its functions to follow-up and review the implementation of the SDGs and a universal post-2015 agenda, it must consolidate synergies with other intergovernmental bodies, whose mandates complement its work. Furthermore, the HLPF has the invaluable potential to be responsive from an integrated perspective to emerging issues, opportunities and challenges identified by such bodies. The Forum’s preparatory processes and outcomes would only benefit from taking into account the work of these bodies. It is also essential for the Forum to actively create the necessary linkages, communicate effectively, and foster partnerships with multiple stakeholders.

Excellencies,

The United Nations Environment Assembly will be an invaluable partner in the follow-up and review of the implementation of the SDGs, particularly their environmental dimension. UNEA is more than just the governing body of the UNEP. Following our intergovernmental mandate, UNEA is the leading global

environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment. UNEA plays a critical role in providing policy guidance and defining policy responses to address emerging environmental challenges. It undertakes policy review and serves as a platform for dialogue and exchange of experiences. It also fosters partnerships for achieving environmental goals and resources mobilization.

One of UNEA's most critical functions is to promote a strong science-policy interface by reviewing the state of the environment and building on existing international instruments, assessments, panels and information networks. In light of current discussions on the role of the HLPF in this field and the further development of Global Sustainable Development Reports (GSDR), I invite you to turn to UNEA's background and experience.

For instance, the participatory process of developing a Summary for Policy Makers, and the summary itself, have proved to be useful tools for creating awareness and promoting the political and legislative uptake of major scientific reports like the Global Environment Outlook (GEO).

Through its work on the science-policy interface with bodies such as the Intergovernmental science-policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the International Resource Panel (IRP) and the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), UNEP has developed over the years a rich experience in promoting policy relevant, evidence-based deliberations and implementable outcomes. It also has rich history in working with and supporting Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs), with due regard for their mandates.

Distinguished colleagues,

UNEA could therefore make instrumental inputs to the HLPF's work strands on integration of the environment in sustainable development in a mutually beneficial relationship. The HLPF would draw on UNEP expertise in areas such as science and environmental law, and could partner with UNEA to work on environmentally related issues. UNEA's outcomes could benefit from the HLPF's work on core crosscutting themes that build on the interlinkages between the

environment and the other dimensions of sustainable development, such as for example, in the nexus between the environment and health, or with regard to the Inclusive Green Economy in the context of poverty eradication and sustainable development.

I note that the Forum will assess whether the SDGs are appropriately covered by international mechanisms and assessments at various levels. There is immense potential for cooperation with UNEA with regard to the global follow-up and review of the environmental dimension and its integration.

UNEA recognizes the vital role of regional ministerial environment fora and ensures that they contribute, as appropriate, to its work. It is therefore extremely well-suited to make a positive contribution to work on the environment from an integrated perspective using a bottom up approach. As I observed when I recently participated in the First Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific, in Bangkok, through regional ministerial fora such as The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), the Forum for Minister of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean and the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible For the Environment (CAMRE), UNEA is able to better identify and take into account regional and national analyses, priorities and perspectives. It can enhance implementation at these levels in the environmental field.

The High-level Political Forum could boost implementation in both developing and developed countries by helping to raise the profile of emerging issues and challenges and opportunities identified by bodies such as UNEA and focusing attention on capacity gaps that require political action. It should be a forum that seeks solutions to gaps and challenges while highlighting opportunities.

As illustrated by the issue of illegal wildlife trade, there are instances when multi-faceted challenges that require urgent action, fall across the mandates of different organizations. In such instances, the HLPF should call political attention to the multiple dimensions of global problems and the need for corresponding action. It should also add value by championing issues that would fall by the wayside because they do not fall within the mandate of any specific organization.

Distinguished Delegates,

Major Groups and Stakeholders are valuable partners that make key contributions to sustainable development. They draw attention to emerging issues and challenges. At the same time, they provide expertise, knowledge and innovative solutions. They play a critical role in implementation and often amplify voices that might have otherwise not been heard.

“The Future We Want” gave UNEA the responsibility to ensure the active participation of all relevant stakeholders, particularly those from developing countries, drawing on best practices and models from relevant multilateral institutions. UNEA takes this task very serious and it is currently putting in place new mechanisms for stakeholder engagement. These new mechanisms will further promote transparency and the effective engagement of civil society in the work of UNEP and its Governing Bodies.

The High-level Political Forum can build on lessons learned and best practices in other institutions and platforms by continuing to encourage the participation of representatives of these bodies in its work in an interactive fashion. It should also remain actively engaged in the work of relevant fora.

As I have outlined there is significant scope for UNEA and the HLPF to work together for the good our people, our prosperity and our planet. I hope that the two bodies will continue to actively explore opportunities for synergies and linkages in the follow-up and review of the implementation of the SDGs and other matters.

I wish to conclude my remarks by cordially inviting all of you to the Second Session of the UNEA, which will take place in Nairobi, Kenya from 23 to 27 May 2016. It will be one of the first major international high-level meetings after the adoption of the SDGs and after COP 21 of the UNFCCC in Paris. As President of UNEA, you can count on my commitment to work along with the UNEP Secretariat in order to ensure a meaningful conference for the early implementation and follow-up of the SDGs and the post-2015 agenda. I look forward to welcoming you to Nairobi, the City in the Sun and the world’s environment capital.

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Thank you for your kind attention.