

# STATEMENT IN CONNECTION WITH THE STOCKHOLM+50 MEETING 2-3 JUNE 2022

## THE WORLD FEDERATION OF UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATIONS

The Stockholm+50 meeting commemorates the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Environment and celebrates 50 years of global environmental action. This conference marks the first time the word “environment” was used in the title of a UN conference, provided the first set of principles to guide international cooperation on the environment, led to the establishment of UNEP, and was the first UN event that supported the participation of civil society.

We, the members of the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA), express our deep concern about the current situation for the planet and its inhabitants. Recalling the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Biodiversity Framework, the Paris agreement, the 2030 Agenda and Our Common Agenda, we acknowledge there is no shortage of solutions but also recognize that governments, the private and public sectors and all relevant stakeholders gathering in Stockholm need to urgently increase efforts to address environmental issues that have resulted from human activity — keeping in mind the need to implement these initiatives alongside an equitable recovery from COVID-19.

UN Member States and all other relevant stakeholders have a responsibility to ensure that humanity can live in harmony with nature. While there is no shortage of solutions proposed to achieve this goal, progress in achieving this goal has been very slow. Governments have made many commitments on among other issues reducing their carbon footprint but because agreements have not been binding, the impact on mitigating and adapting to climate change has fallen short of what is needed.

Leaders of the world must put the health and well-being of the planet and the peoples that they serve first. Businesses must take the lead in shifting to a circular economy and civil society must adopt more sustainable lifestyles to minimize waste and pollution.

Resolution 48/13 adopted by the Human Rights Council in October 2021 has recognized our right to a healthy environment, but this right will only be protected when the social, economic and environmental dimensions are balanced in the pursuit of an improved standard of living. Future generations must not be denied the opportunity to inherit a planet that meets their needs.



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## **CALL ON GOVERNMENTS TO STEP UP EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE A HEALTHY PLANET AND PROSPERITY OF ALL**

Hundreds of millions of people have been lifted from extreme poverty but inequality between and within states remains a threat to a sustainable future. Climate change, loss of biodiversity, and pollution are not only threats to the planet but also exacerbate existing inequalities. Therefore, the link between economic growth and environmental degradation must be emphasized. Governments must pay particular attention to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable populations – women, youth, indigenous people, people with disabilities, refugees and migrants – who are disproportionately affected by climate change are addressed and that their need to improve their standard of living does not lead to further degradation of the environment.

Looked at from another perspective, achieving peace and human well-being are inseparable from achieving the environmental goals. While armed conflict results in severe damage to the environment, poor management of natural resources plays an important role in provoking conflict and hindering the achievement of a sustainable peace in post-conflict societies. A study by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute found that 8 of the 10 countries that were hosting the largest peace operations in 2018 were in areas highly exposed to climate change.

We call upon all governments to take steps to:

- follow through on their commitments to reduce their carbon footprint and keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius;
- include environmental assets when measuring development;
- raise awareness of how human activities damage the environment and encourage civil society to take action at the local level by adopting more sustainable lifestyles to mitigate the impact of climate change;
- end fossil and chemical subsidies;
- ensure a just transition from fossil fuels to a green economy so that those who are most vulnerable to the impact of climate change receive the social protection and job training they need to prevent them from falling into poverty;
- increase financing to support ecosystem restoration, halt biodiversity loss and combat desertification;
- strengthen environmental laws that protect ecosystems on land, water and oceans, with a particular emphasis on reducing plastic pollution;
- achieve a sustainable and inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic which has halted and reversed decades of development. Ensure that people around the world have equal access to vaccines and universal health care;
- include businesses, youth and civil society in the decision-making process on what policies to adopt to address global warming. Civil society must be able to carry out its work safely. The voices of marginalized groups must be protected and amplified, and defenders of human rights and the environment must be able to carry out their work without fear of being harmed.

### **CALL ON BUSINESSES TO STEP UP EFFORTS TO SHIFT TO A CIRCULAR ECONOMY**

In 2019, over 92 billion tonnes of materials were extracted from the earth and processed into a myriad of products. The production process alone contributed to about half of the global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and resulted in an enormous amount of waste that included, but was not limited to, plastics, textiles, food, electronics and more. This waste is taking its toll on the environment and human health. One measure of this impact is the estimate by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation that by 2050 there will be more plastic in the ocean, by weight, than fish.

We, the members of the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA), support the Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy (PACE) that was created in 2018 by the World Economic Forum as a platform for public and private sector leaders to make commitments and accelerate action towards the Circular Economy.

We call on businesses to:

- shift to using more eco-friendly packaging and support other efforts to reduce waste;
- choose greener infrastructures and equipment;
- choose suppliers who demonstrate that they follow and support sustainable practices;
- raise awareness about eco-friendly practices and lifestyle choices among employees and promote eco-friendly ways of working that rely more, for example, on telecommuting or moving towards paperless conferences;
- help hold governments accountable for the commitments they have made in global agreements on climate change; and
- increase collaborative partnerships with civil society to find solutions to the environmental challenge we are facing today.

### **CALL ON CIVIL SOCIETY TO ADOPT MORE SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES**

Civil society has been increasingly called up to assume more responsibility for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. At the same time, there is a general trend by governments across the globe to enact more restrictive regulatory measures, increase controls, and restrict funding which is making it more challenging for civil society institutions to carry out their activities.

We ask governments to be more supportive of civil society's activities and to make sure they are included in the decision-making processes that focus on combating climate change, loss of biodiversity and pollution. We also recognize that civil society must step up its efforts to adapt to and mitigate the impact of climate change and to protect life both on land and under water.

Therefore, we call on civil society to:

- play a greater role in monitoring progress made in achieving the SDGs at the country level and holding governments accountable for the commitments they have made to combat climate change;
- assist in localizing the SDGs to make sure that they are included in policies enacted at the local level;
- empower women-based and youth organizations for climate action;

- educate the public on how they can adopt more sustainable lifestyles that can help combat climate change.

We, the members of the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA), echo UN Secretary-General Guterres' concerns that the climate emergency is "the defining issue of our time" and commit our efforts to bringing about solidarity on environmental action through highlighting the interconnectedness of life on the planet.

We, the members of the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA), recognize the momentum offered by the celebration of UNEP@50 and Stockholm+50 highlighting the need for radical transformation to regenerate and reimagine the relationship with nature reaffirm urgency to hold our leaders and other stakeholders responsible for any threats to our common ecosystems. All living species and future generations depend on us to act now.