

Statement of Acceptance

by

**President of the UNEP Governing Council/Global
Ministerial Environment Forum**

Under

Agenda Item 2(a) – Election of Officers

Before

**The Twenty-fourth Session of the Governing
Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum of the
United Nations Environment Programme**

Nairobi, 5 February 2007

Check against Delivery

Honourable Ministers

Your Excellencies Members of the Diplomatic Corp

Ms. Anna Tibaijuka, Executive Director of UN-HABITAT

Mr. Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. First of all, I would like to warmly thank you for entrusting me with the task as the President of the twenty-fourth session of the UNEP Government Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum. It is indeed an honour for me to have been elected to this office for the next two years.
2. I look forward to this challenging assignment and above all to advance the environmental agenda. I count on your support and cooperation, and I am certain that we – in the spirit of partnership - will be able to steer this meeting to a successful conclusion.
3. I will count on the collaboration of all delegates in ensuring that the deliberations and negotiations in the coming week will take place in a spirit of cooperation and honesty and that we all keep in mind that the results of our work will determine the future of the state of our environment and planet.

Excellencies

Distinguished delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

4. Allow me also to congratulate, the outgoing President of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, His Excellency Rachmat Witoelar, State Minister for Environment, Republic of Indonesia for your inspiration and guidance during the past two years. Under your able leadership, the environmental

agenda has moved to new heights and important recommendations have been made on the significance of mainstreaming environment into internationally agreed development goals. Just one year ago in Dubai, you led crucial discussions on the linkages between environment and tourism and energy and environment. The results achieved during your tenure as President of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum will be a legacy for years to come.

5. Mr. Steiner – congratulations on your appointment as Executive Director of UNEP. This is your first Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum and, on behalf of the Bureau and all delegates, I can assure you that we look forward to working closely with you during this session as well as in the years to come.
6. As head of the environmental organization of the United Nations and as the responsible for the environmental pillar in the context of sustainable development, the global community, governments, civil society, academia, the private sector and individuals will turn to you for innovation, inspiration and leadership. Although a heavy burden rests on your shoulders, you have dedicated staff, partners and collaborators around the world that will support you in furthering the environmental cause.
7. Nairobi is the environmental capital of the world and being in this charming city is a real pleasure. The people of Kenya are blessed with a country that harbors natural treasures and beautiful environment. At the same time, Kenyans are experiencing first hand the challenges on the way to achieving sustainable development. Even more so in the face of climate change and weather irregularities that more and more often cause droughts and scarcity. I wish to pay homage to the citizens of Nairobi and the people of Kenya for their courage, conviction and commitment in perusing the wise and sustainable use of its national resources and in furthering the environmental cause.

Excellencies
Distinguished delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

8. The twenty-fourth session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum is being held at an important cross road in the affairs of the world and in the ongoing discussions on global environmental governance and the from of the United Nations. Recently we witnessed the release of the report of the Secretary General's High-level Panel on UN system-wide coherence in the areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and the Environment – 'Delivering as One' - and the UN General Assembly's consultations on the institutional framework for the UN system's environmental activities.
9. Environment and its institutional structure has for the first time ever received the highest levels of attention. The time is ripe to reform the institutions and structures that deliver global and regional environmental policy. We all know that environment and development are inter-related. A strengthening of the work of the United Nations in environmental activities will have a positive impact on the economic and social dimensions of sustainable development.
10. By improving compliance with Multilateral Environmental Agreement and enhancing capacity building, important components of the complex problems associated with environmental governance is addressed. But we must keep in mind that our work and responsibility does not stop here. Fragmented institutional structures do not offer the appropriate framework to address global environmental problems successfully. A strong new institutional arrangement, with legitimacy and political support, is required to bring real change.
11. The recommendations are clear – UNEP should be the provider of substantive leadership and guidance on environmental issues and serve as the environmental policy pillar of the UN system. It is not only an opportunity but an obligation, and we – the

Governments of the world - are responsible for ensuring that this obligation is turned into action and visible results on the ground.

Excellencies

Distinguished delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

12. Globalization – in all its forms - offers people everywhere opportunities for prosperity and development. Globalization is usually thought of as an economic phenomenon of global movements of capital and trade. However there are environmental dimensions of globalization that are equally important both for the future of the life support system of the planet and for their impacts on human society. One challenge in a globalizing society is to empower people and institutions to respond effectively to their local environmental situations, wherever they are, while maintaining at the same time a global perspective on their environmental impacts.
13. There can be no long-term development without environmental care. In order to maximize the benefits of globalization processes, governments need to create enabling conditions to develop sustainable economic, social and environmental policies. Effective integration of environmental policies into macroeconomic frameworks, investment and development is crucial to achieve the development targets set by the Millennium Declaration. This implies design of new environmental policies responding to specific challenges linked to globalization, as well as enhanced capacity to implement existing policies.
14. The Ministerial Roundtables on Globalization and the Environment will explore the economic, information and governance dimensions of globalization. I will count on you and the Ministers present on identifying means for national governments, UNEP, and other actors to respond effectively to environmental challenges and opportunities in the context of globalization.

Excellencies
Distinguished delegates
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15. Reforming the UN is at the top of the agenda of the UN and with the arrival of the new Secretary General the time is opportune for UNEP and the Governing Council to actively engage in the discussions and extend our strongest support to the Secretary General.
16. The foundation for the next steps have been laid with the release of the High-level Report on Coherence together with the Secretary General's reports on "Investing in the United Nations for a Stronger Organization Worldwide", "The Internal Justice Reform" and the report on "Governance and Oversight Review".
17. The overall message is that there is a need for far-reaching reforms and targeted investments to realign the United Nations and its staff to meet current and emerging challenges and objectives.
18. If the UN and UNEP delivers better results for the benefit of the weak and the poor, in a transparent manner when it comes to the utilization of financial resources, and if it continues to contribute to meet the internationally agreed development goals, then it is our – the Member States' – obligation to provide the organization with the necessary mandate, political support as well as long term funding.
19. Strong political support and predictable and sustainable funding makes a strong United Nations and a strong UNEP.
20. The Ministerial segment of this GC/GMEF will be discussing the UN Reforms. I encourage you think constructively and trust that our work will serve as important recommendations to UNEP but also to the Secretary General in shaping and defining the future UN and UNEP.

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21. We have before us a full agenda with many important decisions that will keep the door open for UNEP to continue to provide its leadership in promoting global cooperation for environment and development.
22. Globalization, UN Reform and environmental degradation are just three of the important items that are on our agenda in the week ahead of us. We will also be addressing the UNEP water policy and strategy, coordination and cooperation with civil society and of course the 2008 – 2009 programme of work and budget of UNEP.
23. Coming from Costa Rica, a country where the sustainable management of natural resources has been a state policy and where peace has also been part of our way of life (we abolished the armed forces in 1948) I am very honored to serve as President of UNEP's Governing Council and Global Ministerial Environment Forum. We have now declared Peace with Nature in our country and this concept is now at the center of our development and trade policy.
24. The UN was created in 1945 to promote peace in the world. In this very moment, Peace with Nature should be a pillar of globalization process and UN reform to change the trends in environmental degradation and inherit a sustainable world for future generations.
25. I know that I can count on your support at arriving at consensus as we deliberate on the various issues before the twenty-four session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum.

Thank you.