

**Welcome and Introductory Remarks**

**(Draft)**

**by**

**His Excellency Mr. Rachmat Witoelar,  
State Minister for the Environment of Indonesia  
and  
President of the UNEP Governing Council/  
Global Ministerial Environment Forum**

**Under**

**Agenda Item 1 – Opening of the session**

**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**

**Your Excellency, the President of Kenya**

**Honourable Ministers**

**Your Excellencies Members of the Diplomatic Corp**

**Ms. Anna Tibaijuka, the Executive Director of UN-HABITAT**

**Mr. Achim Steiner, the Executive Director of UNEP**

**Distinguished Guests**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

- 1. It is an honour and privilege for me – once again – to address the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum in the capacity as its President. Allow me to reiterate my sincere thanks to you for entrusting me with these responsibilities for the past two years. The task has indeed been challenging and above all rewarding.**
- 2. Since the Ninth Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, UNEP has seen a change in its Executive Director following the retirement of Mr. Klaus Töpfer in March 2006. Following the nomination of the UN Secretary General, the UN General Assembly unanimously elected Mr. Achim Steiner as the Executive Director of UNEP for a four-year term.**
- 3. On behalf of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, I would like to warmly welcome you to UNEP as its fifth Executive Director. Your professional achievements are a clear testimony of your commitment to environmental sustainability. Throughout your professional career you have served as a role model through your tireless efforts and resolve being the voice of the environment around the globe.**
- 4. You have demonstrated to Governments, civil society, academia, the private sector and grass root organizations - just to mentioned a few of our stakeholders - but most importantly to the peoples of the world that only through concerted efforts can we stop the alarming degradation of the ecosystems, which we all depend on.**

5. **The world is more than ever before looking to UNEP and to you as its head for guidance, direction and solutions to address the biggest threats to the future of our planet and civilization. We – the honorable delegates present in this room today – will support you in every step as you rise to this challenge.**

**Excellencies**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

6. **As my time in office is coming to an end, allow me to briefly reflect on my tenure as your President before handing over to my successor. As many of you will recall, I took over from my colleague, the Honorable Ntagazwa, at the 23<sup>rd</sup> session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum in February 2005.**
7. **I have been privileged to preside over the twenty-third session of the GC/GMEF at which twelve decisions were adopted, including the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building. Equally an honour was it for me to preside over the ninth special session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates in February 2006. At this occasion the Governing Council adopted the decision on the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management. One of the major outcomes of this Council/Forum was the United Arab Emirates Initiative, which is the summary report of the outcomes of the discussions by Ministers and Heads of Delegations on the issue of energy and environment, and tourism and environment.**
8. **In 2005, I participated, in my capacity as President of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, in the World Summit in New York as well as in the eleventh session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in Montreal.**
9. **The outcomes of both meetings had important bearing on UNEP in relation to the international commitment to sustainable management of environmental resources and facilitated by the movement of the environmental agenda. Our goal has to ensure the sound management of environmental resources, not only globally, but at the national and regional levels. Governments themselves must be empowered and allowed to identify their priorities and needs, and in doing so will**

require assistance in many areas. We must remain vigilant that UNEP's new strategic focus will be sustained, for the success of the Bali Strategic Plan will not be measured in a few years, but over a much longer time.

10. I remain a firm believer in the concept of environment for development and that no country can reach any of the internationally agreed development goals without making environment an integral component of national sustainable development plans. This is especially true for the poverty reduction strategies. If we fail to take a long term view no amount of assistance will be sufficient. By strengthening our institutions and legal frameworks, we will be able to more effectively implement environmental conventions and other inter-governmental agreements.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

11. One of the themes of the Ministerial level dialogue during the 24th session of the UNEP GC/GMEF is Globalization and the Environment. Globalization in its many dimensions has become one of the main defining trends of our times with significant consequences for the environment.
12. Globalization is a process of liberation that offers far more opportunities than risks for people - more peace, more prosperity and more growth. Many of the current global environmental challenges are due to the increasing scale of global economic activity and the time is therefore opportune to discuss the benefits that economic globalization offer for environmental protection and sustainable development and how these opportunities and challenges should be addressed. How can the globalization processes contribute to environmental and ecosystem protection and how can global trade and investment assist developing countries to become major producers of environmentally-friendly technologies.
13. The Ministerial segment will also turn its attention to the Report of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and the Environment and the Co-Chairs' summary of the informal consultative process on the institutional framework of the United Nations'

**environmental activities. The recommendations that you will put forward will pave the way for a reformed UN. I count on you to use this unique opportunity.**

- 14. I am convinced that the discussions at the Ministerial Consultations consisting of a mix of panel -, plenary - and roundtable discussions will further this agenda and present UNEP with recommendations as to its role in addressing these challenges.**

**Excellencies**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

- 15. In conclusion, I want to express my appreciation to the Executive Director of UNEP and to the Secretariat as a whole for their counsel and support throughout my tenure. Let me also express my sincere thanks to my colleagues of the Bureau for their support during the past years. Without your commitment and dedication we would not have reached where we are today.**

- 16. Finally, I would like to extend a few words of advice to my successor. The challenges you will face over the next two years are multi-faceted and cut across the entire multilateral system and in particular that of the UN system. Do not shy away from opportunities, they are never lost, but simply taken by others if we are not fast and bold enough.**

- 17. Thank you.**