

NGO intervention on agenda item: 4 (a):

State of the environment, sub-item: World environment situation

Thank you Ms. Chair, My name is Kaisa Kosonen and I'm speaking on behalf of Greenpeace International

The UNEP Year Book 2013 highlights, as one of its main focus areas, the **emerging environmental issues** related to the Arctic.

The Arctic is home to four million people, and as one of the largest remaining unfragmented nature areas, supports unique wildlife. It is also an area that is warming **twice as fast** as the rest of the globe, and where we risk exceeding **several tipping points** that could accelerate **catastrophic** climate change, with perhaps **irreversible consequences** not just for the Arctic, but for the whole planet and its people.

The time-window for preventing this is rapidly closing. The dramatic melting of the Arctic sea-ice, Greenland and permafrost should be taken as a **serious** call for **emergency measures** to cut climate pollution and protect the Arctic. Yet, what we are witnessing is **the opposite**.

The UNEP Year Book concludes that "the **rush for resources**, prompted by **dramatic acceleration** in sea ice melt, calls for **caution** and **effective governance** to avoid damage to the fragile Arctic environment".

In particular, it recommends that there should be **no steps** to exploit the new state of the Arctic **prior to** assessing impacts, and until **adequate management frameworks** have been put in place.

Greenpeace strongly supports UNEP's call for caution and effective governance, and agrees that the Arctic **could set an example of environmental governance** for the rest of the world. In this context, we strongly underline the importance of **respecting rights of indigenous peoples** and their **important role** in protecting the Arctic.

What we want to see, ultimately, is the creation of a **global sanctuary** in the area of international waters around the North Pole; a **ban** on offshore oil drilling; and a **moratorium** on industrial fishing in previously unfished areas of the Arctic region. We also urgently need measures to manage the potentially damaging impacts of increased shipping in the Arctic, and measures to control the emissions of black carbon.

We **welcome** the fact that the UNEP has enhanced its Arctic work in recent years, we **urge** governments to act on UNEP's recommendations and beyond, and call on UNEP to **further expand** its work on this field, through its various streams of work, as the **unique convening authority** on environmental sustainability. Protecting the Arctic is a **global responsibility**, because failing to do that would have dramatic global impacts.

Thank you!