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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

**MESSAGE TO THE 12^H SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UNEP GOVERNING
COUNCIL/GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM
Nairobi, 20 February 2012**

I am pleased to greet the UNEP Governing Council and Global Ministerial Environment Forum, and I offer my congratulations on UNEP's 40th anniversary.

Your meeting occurs four months before the Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development. Four decades since UNEP's founding, and 20 years since the Rio Earth Summit, the moment is ripe to advance the agenda of sustainable development from theory and uneven progress to decisive implementation.

The first of Rio+20's two themes – a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication – is a logical evolution of the spirit of Stockholm, Rio and Johannesburg. The time has come to scale up what has been incubating for 40 years.

The second – the institutional framework for sustainable development – is a call for you, the ministers responsible for the environment, to consider how to make your voice in international affairs commensurate with the challenges and opportunities of sustainability.

I have made sustainable development a priority of my tenure because it cuts across all issues and directly affects the well-being of every member of the human family. In Rio, we have an opportunity to put the world on a sustainable path. But let us be under no illusion about the scale of the challenge. Finding long-term solutions to our economic, social and environmental problems is no easy task. Connecting the dots between water, food and energy security, climate change, urbanization, poverty, inequality and the empowerment of the world's women will take profound vision, deep courage and resolute will from all sectors of society.

We need an outcome from Rio+20 that will relate to the concerns of all. It must be clear, practical and transformational. It should convince even the sceptics. We must be prepared to take decisions and adopt policies that will promote the long-term development of our societies, based on science and the needs of future generations. I urge ministers responsible for the environment to come to Rio armed with bold, creative solutions to achieve the future we want.

I wish you a successful meeting.