

**Common Statement to UNEA by the Global Major Groups and Stakeholder Forum,
read out by the Major Group of Farmers on behalf of all major groups and
stakeholders.**

UNEA Opening Ceremony, 23 June 2014

Thank you, Chair.

1. The Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum acknowledges the historic significance of this first United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP. We join with everyone gathered here in celebrating this momentous event.
2. UNEA must be understood in the context of the dire environmental crisis facing our planet, a crisis that is pressing the boundaries of the planet's physical capacity to sustain a life of dignity for all. We must confront our common responsibility to resolve the severe challenges that face our generation. We therefore urge UNEA to deliver a bold, forward-looking and meaningful outcome that can be implemented in a timely and effective way.
3. We welcome UNEA's agenda, including the need to address the global challenges involved in Environmental Rule of Law, Sustainable Development Goals, and Illegal Trade in Wildlife and Timber. We underscore the centrality of a rights-based approach as well as a science-based approach to UNEA's work, in order to transition toward a paradigm of harmony with nature. Special attention is due to the needs of indigenous peoples and communities in vulnerable situations. We call on Ministers and Delegates at UNEA to commit to the full implementation of UNEA's outcomes.
4. UNEP's mandate is key to safeguarding the global environment. Forty years of experience shows that UNEP can only deliver on its mandate by working in partnership with civil society. A robust and inclusive policy on stakeholder engagement is critical to enable this partnership. We are deeply concerned about the risk of regression from certain good practices on stakeholder participation at UNEP that have also been reflected in the UN General Assembly resolution (67/290) establishing the high level political forum on sustainable development. We are also concerned by the serious inadequacies in UNEP's new access to information policy because the grounds for refusal are too broad, the appeals panel is not independent and decision-making is not accountable. We expect UNEA to adopt rules of procedure that will enable meaningful and effective civil society engagement.
5. To conclude, we have great expectations for UNEA. We are fully committed to making UNEA an historic opportunity for the international community to come and work together to respond with vision and determination to the hopes and aspirations of humanity. We cannot despair; we cannot give up. We all deserve a life of dignity and we demand respect for our right to live in a healthy environment. We all hold a responsibility to our children, future generations and the totality of life on the planet.
6. I thank you.

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