

Joint Statement by Global Civil Society Organizations to UNEA 5.2 on Ukraine

On behalf of 108 NGOs we want to share the following statement:

We are deeply worried as we are witnessing the grave humanitarian consequences of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This armed conflict poses serious risks to the lives and health of Ukraine's people in the first place, while in turn this can also bring severe environmental health risks and affects Ukraine's biodiversity, ecosystems and natural resources that they depend on.

We are gathered here in Nairobi to address a wide range of environmental issues, and to Act for Nature. Yet we must underscore the relationship between armed conflicts and the environment. Already there are serious concerns over the state of Ukraine's nuclear facilities. Critical staff struggle with maintenance of the Chernobyl nuclear site, currently under control of Russian forces, and other nuclear waste storage sites are at risk from nearby shelling.

Furthermore, there are hundreds of industrial sites at risk from being targeted, and capable of causing environmental emergencies if hit, placing the health of nearby communities and ecosystems at risk in the near- and long-term. In recent days, several fuel depots and gas lines were bombed, with additional reports of burning warehouses storing chemicals. Damage to water infrastructure affects water security, and damage and disruption to electricity networks heightens the risks of flooding mines storing nuclear and toxic waste in Donbas, that can further increase risks for the entire region, and may eventually make large parts of it uninhabitable.

Destruction of people's habitats and collapse of environmental governance will further contribute to serious issues around public health, solid waste management and controls of chemical and industrial toxics, in particular those in populated areas. Russian attacks on munitions depots have already led to the dispersal of military-origin heavy metals and toxic hazardous energetic materials, posing additional human health and environmental risks.

In 2016, UNEA-2 adopted a Ukrainian resolution on the protection of the environment in areas affected by armed conflict. The necessity of this was reiterated in 2017, when UNEA-3 adopted an Iraqi-led resolution on conflict-pollution.

Today, we are urging States here in Nairobi to once again, and under pressing circumstances, stress the importance of addressing the relationships between the environment, peace and security. And, in response to the serious environmental risks triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, to:

- Provide funds and technical expertise for an initial rapid environmental assessment by UNEP in consultation with humanitarian agencies and civil society groups, in Ukraine;
- Support local and international initiatives for the identification and monitoring of conflict-linked environmental risks and damage, and;
- Pledge the environmental assistance necessary to Ukraine to address the consequences of the conflict for its people and ecosystems, and to support clean-up and restoration efforts.

Ukraine is just one of many countries where armed conflicts are impacting the environment and undermining environmental governance. We therefore urge States to ensure that the environmental dimensions of armed conflicts are part of UNEP's core work, as well as that of UNEA. We urge States to push back against the vocal minority of governments that oppose UNEP's activities in this space. We also urge them to ensure that UNEP's historical and vital work on the environmental dimensions of conflicts remains a visible and a meaningful part of its current Medium-Term Strategy, as was promised.

The situation in Ukraine demonstrates why these themes must be a part of the Assembly's dialogues and decisions. Their absence from a range of relevant resolutions this year has not gone unnoticed. Whether this is the link between biodiversity loss and armed conflicts, between mineral resource governance and insecurity, or in the potential role that nature can play in supporting human security, or in post-conflict recovery and conflict transformation.

UNEP and UNEA must grasp the vital role that they can play in advancing the environment, peace and security agenda, and in turn supporting stronger norms on the protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts across the whole UN system, and beyond.



Signed by:

5 Gyres	Health Care Without Harm SE Asia	Pax Christi International
Alaska Community Action on Toxics	Heirs To Our Oceans	Peak Plastic Foundation (USA)
Alp Analytica	Humusz Szövetség	Pittsburghers Against Single Use Plastic (PASUP)
Asociación Retorna	IBON International Africa	Plastic Free Seas (Hong Kong)
Azul (USA/Mexico)	IDLoome OÜ	Plastic Pollution Coalition
Bali Waste Platform	Kindred Community (Singapore)	Plastic Soup Foundation (Netherlands)
Bankwatch Romania	Korean Federation for Environmental	Plastic Soup Surfer
Bioneer.ee (MTÜ Ökotark)	Movement(KFEM)	Polish Zero Waste Association
Bláí herinn (Blue army in Iceland)	Legacies of War	Political Ecology Research Centre, Massey
Blum Center for Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development	Legambiente Onlus (Italy)	University
Bye Bye Plastic Bags	Let's Do It Hungary	Project Mariknows (Philippines)
Center for International Environmental Law	Let's Do It Mauritius	Race for Water Foundation
Centre for Financial Accountability (CFA), India	Let's Do it pakistan	Rezero
CHEM Trust	Let's Do It World (Global)	Save Estonia's Forests (Päästame Eesti Metsad MTÜ)
CODEPINK, US	Let's Do It Foundation	Sciaena (Portugal)
Concern waste sindh & recycling	Let's Do It Indonesia / World Cleanup Day Indonesia	Scientists for Global Responsibility (UK)
Conflict and Environment Observatory	Let's Do It Iran	Stop Ecocide International
ECOTON Indonesia	Let's Do It Japan / World Cleanup Day Japan	Studio Viridis Nature Education (Estonia)
Ecowaste Coalition, Philippines	Let's Do It Taiwan	The Last Beach Cleanup
Ekologi brez meja	Let's Do It Turkey (Turkey)	The Last Plastic Straw
Environmental Defence Canada	Let's Do It World (LDIW) Malaysia	The Skill Mill (UK)
Environmental Law Institute	Let's Do It World (LDIW) Myanmar	Trustworks Global
Environmental Rights Foundation (ERF), Taiwan	Mai Mult Verde Romania	Turtle Island Restoration Network
Estonian Roundtable for Development Cooperation	Mondo (Estonia)	Vietnam Zero Waste Alliance
European Environmental Bureau	Mother Earth Foundation Philippines	VOICE Ireland
Fridays For Future Estonia	MTÜ Eesti Vegan Selts	Women Engage for a Common Future
Friends of the Baltic	MTÜ Paranduskelder (Estonia)	Zelena akcija / Friends of the Earth Croatia
Friends of the Earth Cyprus	MTÜ Rannamänniku kaitseks (Estonia)	ZERO - Association for the Sustainability of the Earth System
Geneva Water Hub, Switzerland	MTÜ Roheline Pärnumaa	Zero Waste Austria
Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature (GARN)	MTÜ Uuskasutuskeskus (Estonia)	Zero Waste Europe
Global Council for Science and the Environment	New Idea Association (Poland)	Zero Waste Himalaya
Green Heroes Austria	Niilusoo MTÜ	Zero Waste Laos
Green Pihiliines Migrant Workers Union	Nipe Fagio (Tanzania)	Zero Waste Nepal/HECAF360
Green Tiger Foundation (Estonia)	No Plastic In My Sea (France)	Zero Waste Society (Ukraine)
Greeners Action (Hong Kong)	Norwegian People's Aid	Zoi Environment Network
Greens Movement of Georgia/ Friend of the Earth Georgia	Oceanic Global	Zoological Society of London
Guta Environmental Law Association	PAX	



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