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 en vironmental 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:

Alaska Community Action on Toxics

Alp Analytica

Asociación Retorna

5 Gyres

Azul (USA/Mexico)

Bali Waste Platform

Bankwatch Romania

Bioneer.ee (MTÜ Ökotark)

Blái herinn (Blue army in Iceland)

Blum Center for Poverty Alleviation and

Sustainable Development

Bye Bye Plastic Bags

bye bye riasiic bays

Center for International Environmental Law

Centre for Financial Accountability (CFA), India

OODEDINK HE

CODEPINK, US

Concern waste sindh & recycling

Conflict and Environment Observatory
ECOTON Indonesia

Ecowaste Coalition, Philippines

Ekologi brez meja

Environmental Defence Canada

Environmental Law Institute

Environmental Rights Foundation (ERF), Taiwan

Estonian Roundtable for Development

Cooperation

European Environmental Bureau

Fridays For Future Estonia

Friends of the Baltic

Friends of the Earth Cyprus

Geneva Water Hub, Switzerland

Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature (GARN)

Global Council for Science and the Environment

Green Heroes Austria

Green Pihiliipines Migrant Workers Union

Green Tiger Foundation (Estonia)
Greeners Action (Hong Kong)

Greens Movement of Georgia/ Friend of the Earth

Georgia

Guta Environmental Law Association

Health Care Without Harm SE Asia

Heirs To Our Oceans

Humusz Szövetség

IBON International Africa

IDLoome OÜ

Kindred Community (Singapore)

Korean Federation for Environmental

Movement(KFEM)

Legacies of War

Legambiente Onlus (Italy)

Let's Do It Hungary

Let's Do It Mauritius

Let's Do it pakistan

Let's Do It World (Global)

Let's Do It Foundation

let's Do It Indonesia

/ World Cleanup Day Indonesia

Let's Do It Iran

Let's Do It Japan

/ World Cleanup Day Japan

let's Do It Taiwan

Let's Do It Tükiye (Turkey)

Let's Do It World (LDIW) Malaysia

/ Malaysian Humanitarian Foundation (MHF)

Let's Do It World (LDIW) Myanmar

Mai Mult Verde Romania

Mondo (Estonia)

Mother Earth Foundation Philippines

MTÜ Eesti Vegan Selts

MTÜ Paranduskelder (Estonia)

MTÜ Rannamänniku kaitseks (Estonia)

...

MTÜ Roheline Pärnumaa

MTÜ Uuskasutuskeskus (Estonia)

New Idea Association (Poland)

Niilusoo MTÜ

Nipe Fagio (Tanzania)

No Plastic In My Sea (France)

Norwegian People's Aid

Oceanic Global

PAX

Pax Christi International

Peak Plastic Foundation (USA)

Pittsburghers Against Single Use Plastic (PASUP)

Plastic Free Seas (Hong Kong)

Plastic Pollution Coalition

Plastic Soup Foundation (Netherlands)

Plastic Soup Surfer

Polish Zero Waste Association

Political Ecology Research Centre, Massey

University

Project Mariknows (Philippines)

Race for Water Foundation

Rezero

Save Estonia's Forests (Päästame Eesti Metsad

MTÜN

Sciaena (Portugal)

Scientists for Global Responsibility (UK)

Stop Ecocide International

Studio Viridis Nature Education (Estonia)

The Last Beach Cleanup

The Last Plastic Straw

The Skill Mill (UK)

Trustworks Global

Turtle Island Restoration Network

Vietnam Zero Waste Alliance

VOICE Ireland

Women Engage for a Common Future

Zelena akcija / Friends of the Earth Croatia

ZERO - Association for the Sustainability of the

Earth System

Zero Waste Austria

Zero Waste Europe

Zero Waste Himalaya

Zero Waste Laos

Zero Waste Nepal/HECAF360

Zero Waste Society (Ukraine)
Zoi Environment Network

Zoological Society of London