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Sustainable nitrogen management*

The United Nations Environment Assembly,

Recognizing the multiple pollution threats resulting from anthropogenic reactive nitrogen, with adverse effects on the terrestrial, freshwater and marine environments, contributing to air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, while acknowledging the benefits of nitrogen use for food and energy production,

Recognizing also that global crop production in the world and the world's food security is dependent on nutrients, including nitrogen and phosphorus resource use,

Noting that global economy-wide nitrogen use is extremely inefficient with over 80% of anthropogenic reactive nitrogen lost to the environment,[1] which leads to water, soil and air pollution that threatens human health, wellbeing and ecosystem services and contributes to climate change, due to increases in greenhouse gas emissions, and stratospheric ozone depletion,

Recognizing the existing actions already taken by countries as part of national action plans and intergovernmental agreements related to water quality, air quality, climate and biodiversity,

Acknowledging that current policies related to reactive nitrogen in many countries are fragmented and incoherent,

Realizing that intersectorally incoherent approaches on global nitrogen cycle are resulting in unquantified trade-offs between different forms of nitrogen pollution and contributing to barriers to the adoption of policies for cleaner water, cleaner air, climate mitigation and adaptation and biodiversity protection,

Noting the initiatives of the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management (GPNM) and the recent establishment of the International Nitrogen Management System as a science support system for policy development across the nitrogen cycle, including working with regional groups and actors to allow regional perspectives to be developed within the global context; also acknowledges the work done within UNECE Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution and its Taskforce on Reactive Nitrogen,

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

[1] Sutton M.A., et al (2013) Our Nutrient World: The challenge to produce more food and energy with less pollution. Global Overview of Nutrient Management. Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Edinburgh on behalf of the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management and the International Nitrogen Initiative.

Noting also the initiative taken by South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP) and the International Nitrogen Management System focussed on the South Asia Seas region, towards development of a globally coherent approach for sustainable nitrogen management during its deliberations in Male in September 2017,

Calls on the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to:

(a) Consider the options to facilitate better coordination of policies across the global nitrogen cycle at the national, regional and global levels, including consideration of the case to establish an intergovernmental coordination mechanism on nitrogen policies, based primarily on existing networks and platforms and consider the case for developing an integrated nitrogen policy, which could enhance the gravity of common cause between multiple policy domains,

(b) Support exploration of the options**,** in close collaboration with relevant UN bodies, including the Food and Agriculture Organization, and multilateral environmental agreements as appropriate for better management of the global nitrogen cycle**,** and how these could help achieve Sustainable Development Goals, including sharing of assessment methodologies, relevant best practices and guidance documents and emerging technologies for recovery and recycling of nitrogen and other such nutrients,

(c) Coordinate existing relevant platforms for assessments of the multiple environmental, food and health benefits of possible goals for improved nitrogen management, while ensuring coordinated management of the relevant datasets to allow development of the integrated and sustainable nitrogen management approach and identify current information gaps, including in quantifying the net economic benefits for food and energy production, freshwater, coastal and marine environmental quality, air quality, greenhouse gas mitigation and stratospheric ozone depletion mitigation, underpinned by the development of reference values,

(d) Facilitate with relevant UN bodies, including the Food and Agriculture Organization, and as appropriate multilateral environmental agreements the promotion of appropriate training and capacity for policy makers and practitioners for developing widespread understanding and awareness of the nitrogen cycling and opportunities for action,

(e) Support member states with sharing and making available existing information and knowledge in the development of evidence based and intersectorally coherent approach to domestic decision-making towards sustainable nitrogen management where appropriate,

(f) Report on the progress achieved in the implementation of this resolution in UNEA-6.