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**United Nations
Environment Assembly of the
United Nations Environment Programme**

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United Nations Environment Programme**
Third session
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**Draft resolution on managing soil pollution to achieve
Sustainable Development**

Proposed by the Group of African States

The United Nations Environment Assembly,

Recalling the adoption of United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1, “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”;

Recalling the revised World Soil Charter, adopted by the 39th FAO Conference (Rome, 13 June 2015), and reaffirming in this regard that Governments should establish and implement regulations to limit the accumulation of contaminants beyond established levels to safeguard human health and well-being and facilitate remediation of contaminated soils that exceed these levels where they pose a threat to humans, plants, and animals;

Recalling the United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 2/24 on Combating Desertification, land degradation and drought and promoting sustainable pastoralism and rangelands;

Welcoming the work of the FAO on soil issues, including the establishment of the Global Soil Partnership (GSP) by the FAO Council in December 2012 and the publication of the “Status of the World’s Soil Resources” report by the GSP Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soil (ITPS) in December 2015 as well as the development of the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management (VGSSM) endorsed by the 155th session of the FAO Council (Rome, 5 December 2016);

Welcoming the work of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) on land and the publication of the Global Land Outlook at the UNCCD COP13 in September 2017;

Acknowledging that land is the main resource base around which ecosystem services are anchored and that soil is one of the largest reservoirs of biodiversity, and the negative impacts of the contamination of soil undermine productivity and sustainability of ecosystems, biodiversity, agriculture and food security and clean ground and surface water potentially hampering the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including, SDGs 1,2, 3, 6,12, 13 and 15¹;

Further acknowledging that soils, as containing the largest active carbon stock after the oceans, are an essential element for climate change mitigation and resilience, and that land pollution leads to a reduction of the soil biological activity and therefore is one factor contributing to the reduction of its capacity to act as a carbon sink.

¹ SDGs, 1 on ending poverty, 2 on ending hunger and achieving food security, 3 on ensuring availability and sustainable management of water, 12 on 13 actions to combat climate change and its impacts and 15 on protecting and promoting sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainable management of forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation.

Recognizing that preventing, reducing and managing soil pollution is vital to protecting human and environmental health and improving human well-being;

Concerned about the threat of soil pollution emanating from oil spillages, unsustainable mining practices, unregulated or uncontrolled disposals and emissions of chemicals and heavy metals, wastes, improper use of fertilisers and pesticides in agricultural production, and contamination from landfills;

Also concerned about the knowledge gap and lack of data and information on soil pollution and contamination and its impact on health and the environment globally, as well as the lack of coordinated and robust policies approach to curtail soil pollution, at national, and where relevant regional and international levels;

Emphasizing that capacity building, technology development and transfer on mutually agreed terms and resource mobilization from all sources are important elements to achievement of sustainable development;

1. *Requests* Member States and invites relevant UN organizations to address soil pollution within the global environmental, food security and agriculture, development and health agendas in an integrated manner, especially through preventive approaches and risk management using available science;

2. *Encourages* Member States to undertake necessary measures at national, and as appropriate regional levels, to among others, formulate new and strengthen existing strategic interventions, policies and legislation, aimed at setting norms and standards to prevent, reduce and manage soil pollution;

3. *Urges* the United Nations Environment Programme to provide, upon request and in collaboration with other UN agencies and stakeholders, support to governments' efforts to strengthen and, as appropriate and coordinate national and, regional policies and legislation to curb soil pollution;

4. *Invites* the international community, regional bodies, civil society and the private sector to support development of information systems of polluted sites and programmes that invest in the sustainable land management and research aimed at preventing, reducing and managing soil pollution;

5. *Reiterates* that availability and accessibility of adequate, predictable and sustainable resource mobilization from all sources, technology development, dissemination, diffusion and transfer on mutually agreed terms and capacity building, are important to the effective prevention, reduction and management of soil pollution;

6. *Requests* the United Nations Environment Programme, in collaboration with other UN agencies and relevant global and regional initiatives with expertise related to soil and soil pollution, including the FAO, the Global Soil Partnership, the UNCCD, the WHO, the Stockholm and Minamata Conventions and the International Committee on Contaminated Land to cooperate as appropriate on efforts geared at preventing, reducing and managing soil pollution;

7. *Further requests* the Executive Director within available resources by the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly to invite within their respective mandates relevant UN organizations, including the World Health Organization (WHO), the FAO, the GSP and its Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soil and the UNCCD:

(a) to prepare a report based on available scientific information and data, on:

- (i) the extent and future trends of soil pollution, considering both point source contamination and diffuse pollution;
- (ii) the risks and impacts of soil pollution on health, the environment and food security including land degradation and the burden of disease resulting from exposure to contaminated soil

(b) to elaborate technical guidelines for the prevention and minimization of soil contamination as a contribution to support the implementation of the VGSSM, including nature-based solutions.

8. *Also requests* the United Nations Environment Programme in consultation with Member States to invite within their respective mandates and available resources the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), World Health Organisation (WHO) and Food Agricultural Organisation (FAO), other relevant United Nations agencies and in collaboration with partners, including, the academia, research and scientific institutions to work with United Nations Environment Programme to:

- (a) promote research and development that contributes to controlling and managing soil pollution;
- (b) strengthen the science-policy interface to inform policy making on soil pollution, as appropriate, at national, regional and international levels;
- (c) raise awareness and improve the dissemination of knowledge on soil pollution;
- (d) promote a coordinated approach for combating soil pollution including the promotion of coherent and coordinated data collection and management, and information sharing on soil pollution.

9. *Further requests* the Executive Director to report progress on the implementation of the present resolution at the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly.
