

SPEECH FOR THE OPENING SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

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My thanks for inviting me to speak at the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. My deep thanks also to Ghada Waly, at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for the kind invite and for UNEP's strong partnership with UNODC on this and other environmental challenges before us.

Tackling environmental crime is a crucial component of addressing the triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste. The numbers tell us why.

Global losses from illegal fishing cost more than USD 36 billion per year. Illegal logging accounts for 15-30 per cent of the timber trade, driving climate change. The illegal trade in wildlife contributes to the threat of extinction of one million species.

As well as driving the triple planetary crisis, such crimes damage livelihoods, peace, security and stability – from bankrolling armed groups to claiming the lives of those who defend the environment.

The global recognition of the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment is a step in the right direction. As is the December 2021 General Assembly resolution on combating crimes that affect the environment. Now we need to tackle the issue at the right scale, with the right partners.

We need to act globally.

We need to strengthen and back Multilateral Environmental Agreements that identify activities harmful to the environment. Equally, those who control our borders need the skills to stop environmental crime. Through the Green Customs Initiative, UNEP and its partners, including UNODC, build these skills.

We need to act regionally.

Through the Regional Enforcement Network for Chemicals and Waste, UNEP helped 25 countries in Asia Pacific seize 865,000 tonnes of hazardous chemicals and harmful waste. We need more such successes.

We need to act nationally.

Countries can do a great deal within their borders – which is why UNEP supports member states to improve transparency and accountability on environmental crime.

At this gathering, I hope to see recommendations for consolidating our networks of cooperation. It is only by working together that we respond to the increasing sophistication of environmental crime operations and create a better future for everyone.

I look forward to hearing about the outcomes of this important discussion and I thank you.