



Remarks By

Dr. Jean-Pierre Ilboudo

on behalf of

Ms. Rachel Odede

UN Resident Coordinator a.i for the

**Commemoration of the World
Environment Day**

05 June 2018

Government Office Park

Windhoek

Director of Ceremonies, Mr Teofilus Nghitila;

**Ms Saimi Shidute-Christoph, Deputy Permanent Secretary
of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism;**

**His Worship Muesee Kazapua, Mayor of the City of
Windhoek;**

**Mr. Benedict Lubinda, CEO of the Environmental
Investment Fund;**

Senior Government Officials Present;

Fellow UNCT Members and Colleagues from the UN;

Distinguished Invited guests;

Members of the Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good Morning!

It is with great pleasure that I give this speech on behalf of the UN family in Namibia. Allow me to start by expressing appreciation to the Ministry of Environment and Tourism for the invitation. For more than forty years, World Environment Day has reminded us of our responsibility for the preservation of our planet.

On the initiative of the Republic of India, host to this year's World Environment Day, the theme is "Beat Plastic Pollution", an environmental, social and economic concern.

The World Environment Day is observed annually on the 5th of June to promote worldwide awareness of the importance of the environment and taking care for it.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our environment is changing at an unprecedented rate and the impacts of climate change are global. For example, we are seeing changes in weather patterns which threaten food production as well as rising sea levels that increase the risk of flooding¹.

Although greenhouse gases occur naturally and are essential to trap some of the sun's warmth to make Earth livable for humans, a century and a half of industrialization, which includes burning fossil fuels and clearing forests and trees, has driven up quantities of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. This has resulted in too much heat being trapped.

On top of this, our world is increasingly over-consuming, discarding, littering and polluting plastics, which is detrimental to our planet. Not only is conventional plastic made from fossil

¹ United Nations. 'Climate Change'. <https://bit.ly/2irs9D6>

fuels, which contributes to greenhouse gases, but it also remains in our environment for a long time.

- Every year the world uses 500 billion plastic bags and every minute the world buys 1 million plastic bottles².
- To make things worse, a large part of this waste ends up in our environment where it can survive for up to 500 years before being decomposed.
- Oceans are particularly affected as a lot of the plastic waste generated on land ends up in the sea and causes significant economic losses³.

And yet, plastic production continues to rise and continues to impact our planet, including the beautiful Namibia. Namibia is among the countries most vulnerable to climate change and thus the negative impact of plastics in our environment.

- It is one of the driest countries south of the Sahara, with average temperatures getting hotter⁴.
- It is highly dependent on climate change-sensitive sectors such as agriculture, livestock management and fishing⁵.

The agriculture sector remains central to the lives of the

² Plastic Oceans. 'The Facts'. <https://bit.ly/2HrOliJ>

³ UNEP. 'Dimensions of Pollution: Marine'. <https://bit.ly/2CprBlz>

⁴ World Bank. Climate Change Knowledge Portal. Namibia. <https://bit.ly/2svHapv> - Average temperatures between 1901-1930 and 1991-2015 increased from 24.6°C to 24.9°C in January and 14°C to 14.6°C in July.

⁵ Ministry of Environment and Tourism. 2011. 'National Policy on Climate Change for Namibia'. <https://bit.ly/2Hj5TBU>

majority of the population – by directly or indirectly supporting over 70 percent of the population⁶.

- It ranked 132nd out of 180 countries in the provision of environmental health for the Environmental Performance Index (EPI)⁷.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is however, good news. The Namibian government and people have demonstrated leadership when it comes to awareness and response to pollution and climate change.

The Namibian Government is committed to solving the issue at hand through policies and frameworks such as the Pollution Control and Waste Management Policy, the National Climate Strategy and Action Plan and the Fifth National Development Plan (NDP5)⁸.

Recently, H.E. the President, Dr. Hage Geingob launched a nation-wide clean-up campaign which aimed to increase public awareness on community cleanliness, environmental protection and effective use of resources.

⁶ FAO. 'Namibia at a Glance'. <https://bit.ly/2LXyaSg>

⁷ Environmental Performance Index. 2018. <https://bit.ly/2swe9di>

⁸ Through the Environmental Sustainability Pillar. <https://bit.ly/2J54On4>

Namibia has also committed to and localised the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which accords primacy to people, prosperity and planet. This agenda strives to “ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources”.

Specifically, Goal 14 ‘Life Below Water’ and Goal 15 ‘Life on Land’ focus on protecting marine and land ecosystems, halting biodiversity loss and ensuring the sustainable use of marine and terrestrial resources. At the same time, Goal 13 ‘Climate Action’ encourages each and every one of us to do something that will positively help protect the environment. And, the time to act is now.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, on behalf of the UN System in Namibia, let me assure you of our commitment to work with the Government of the Republic of Namibia and partners to help protect the beautiful Land of the Brave. We are guided by our partnership framework with Government, the United Nations Partnership Framework (UNPAF) 2019-2023 to ensure environmental sustainability.

At the end of the day, if we do not substantially reduce our plastic waste, there will be severe consequences for biodiversity,

human health and food security. Together, we can protect the environment and ‘beat plastic pollution’ to ensure that future generations can live in a healthy, clean and sustainable Namibia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please allow me to now read the UN Secretary General’s message for the World Environment Day:

“A healthy planet is essential for a prosperous and peaceful future. We all have a role to play in protecting our only home, but it can be difficult to know what to do or where to start. That’s why this World Environment Day has just one request: beat plastic pollution.

Our world is swamped by harmful plastic waste. Every year, more than 8 million tons end up in the oceans. Microplastics in the seas now outnumber stars in our galaxy. From remote islands to the Arctic, nowhere is untouched. If present trends continue, by 2050 our oceans will have more plastic than fish.

On World Environment Day, the message is simple: reject single-use plastic. Refuse what you can’t re-use. Together, we can chart a path to a cleaner, greener world.”

The United Nations fully associates itself with reflection and action in support of sustainable development, through its programmes for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda. Together we can change our habits and beat this problem.

I thank you.