UNON DG REMARKS –WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

3 JUNE 2016

Welcome everyone and thank you for coming to this celebration of World Environment Day.

The purpose of the Day is to stimulate political attention, public action, and personal commitment to environmental preservation.

This is a day that should inspire all of us to take action for the environment. As UN staff members and global citizens, we have a special responsibility to care for the environment because we should all be leading by example.

We also have a special responsibility to advance environmental preservation because we have the privilege of working on this wonderful campus.

The UNON compound is not only one of the most beautiful and forested UN offices in the world; it also hosts the global HQs of UNEP and UN-Habitat, which play such key roles in promoting sustainable development and creating a healthier balance between nature and humanity.

This celebration of World Environment Day is taking place at a particularly crucial time. It comes during the first year of our 15-year effort to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, five months after the conclusion of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and one week after the second session of the UN Environmental Assembly, which was held right here on this compound.

It is clear from this confluence of events that the environment has taken its rightful place at the center of the international agenda, and all of us have a role to play in advancing environmental preservation, including on this compound.

 That is why last year, UNEP, UN-Habitat and UNON signed the Environmental Commitment Charter, aimed at ensuring a more environmentally sustainable management of the UN campus and its facilities.

I am pleased that significant progress has been made since last year to put the Charter into practice.

For example, UNON is actively working towards developing an Environmental Management System for the compound. This will provide a framework to manage our environmental impact and improve the environmental performance of facilities management services, as well as the activities and operations on the campus.

This is an important step and will require major efforts on the part of all UN entities on the compound.

Additionally, efforts are underway to increase the amount of waste recycled from the offices and other operations at UNON, including through the purchase of recycling and waste separation bins for the compound.

This initiative will reduce our environmental impact associated with waste disposal in the Dandora dumpsite.

UNON has signed a partnership with UNEP for the implementation of a pilot project on wastewater treatment at the compound. This will start with an assessment of the facilities and the collection of water data.

Last but not least, UNON has recently phased out the sale of plastic water bottles at our catering facilities and replaced them with glass bottles. Glass bottles, besides containing less oil-based chemicals than plastic ones, can be reused, thus avoiding waste generation and unnecessary energy use for their recycling.

Every staff member that decides to refill their glass water bottles instead of disposing of them after use will contribute to drastically reducing waste on the compound. This is a good example of how little changes can make a big difference in the long run.

I hope we will all use this Day to reflect on what other little changes in our day-to-day actions and behaviors can contribute to our shared goal of creating a greener community, and a healthier world.

Thank you again for coming today, and thank you for your kind attention.