

Make this the year of 'transformative solutions' to avert disastrous climate change: UN Deputy Chief

It is within our power to make 2019 the “year of transformative solutions” and “avoid the disastrous effects of climate change”, which threaten ecosystems, the global economy, health and security, the UN Deputy Secretary-General told delegates gathered in Nairobi for the [UN Environment Assembly](#), on Thursday.

[Amina Mohammed](#) said that she had been inspired by the ideas discussed at the conference – the world’s highest-level decision-making body on the environment – in support of UN environment’s ([UNEP](#)) #SolveDifferent campaign to find innovative solutions to environmental challenges.

She urged the audience, which included Heads of State and government ministers, to “reshape the global economy into one that rewards careful stewardship and punishes waste and pollution.”

Addressing the main topic of the Assembly – the need to shift to sustainable forms of consumption and production – the deputy UN chief reminded the audience that we are all living with negative consequences of the current “Take, Make and Dispose” global economic model.

Examples include the harmful environmental and health impacts associated with the extraction of metals used in mobile phones; the millions of tons of plastic waste flowing into the oceans; and the huge amount of electronic waste generated every year.

“Every day we live with the shortcomings of a linear economic model based on ‘Take, Make, and Dispose’” Amina Mohammed, UN Deputy Secretary-General

The UN’s solution to breaking out of an unsustainable system that is wreaking havoc on the environment, said Ms. Mohammed, is to change the perception that it is necessary to deplete natural resources in order to grow the economy: “We can in fact achieve greater economic benefits from innovative approaches to how we eat, purchase, travel, and discard waste.” This major shift would mean moving away from a model of built-in obsolescence, creating products that last longer, and ensuring that all products can either be recycled or reused

The Deputy Secretary-General gave specific examples showing how governments, the private sector and civil society are making a positive change. She noted that several large hotel chains are committed to reducing water consumption and waste by 50%; countries including India and Costa Rica are committed to eliminating single-use plastics; and she cited a project in the Kiribati

Islands, which is providing families with a unique hydroponic system to make food without soil.

It is time, she added, to take a “big ambition leap,” in the build up to the [UN Climate Summit](#) in September, convened by [Secretary-General António Guterres](#), which will aim to inject momentum into the fight against climate change.

Ms. Mohammed said the UN chief expects world leaders to come to the Summit “not with a speech, but with a plan”, that will explain how countries expect to drastically reduce emissions, create decent “green jobs”, and build sustainable cities. The plans, she said, must be credible and ambitious enough to “convince all the people taking to the streets, that they are taken seriously.”