

**Fifth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe"
Kiev, Ukraine, 21-23 May 2003**

Item 14: Consideration of the draft ministerial declaration

**INTERVENTION BY MR. BOŽO KOVAČEVIĆ,
MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND PHYSICAL PLANNING,
CROATIA**

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to extend my congratulations and gratitude to the Ukrainian Ministry of Environment and the Government of Ukraine, for organising this important conference, where we all attempted to make a step forward following the commitments assumed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. This is to be primarily reflected in the Ministerial Declaration as well as in other, no less important documents that we have adopted.

The Republic of Croatia is pleased to see that divergent positions of the UNECE countries have been taken into consideration and reconciled, and as such reflected in the Declaration. The diversity of the UNECE Region and the ability to bring all the countries on an equal footing is a distinctive characteristic of this fora which we highly respect.

Croatia has been participating in the Environment for Europe process from the outset. We deem that the achievements of this process that are referred to in the Ministerial Declaration such as the Environmental Action Programme, Environmental Programme for Europe, UNECE programme of Environmental Performance Reviews, the three assessment reports and, of course, the development of legally binding instruments and other policy tools, have been of great assistance to the countries in transition such as Croatia. These have led to the improvements in our own state of environment and also paved the way towards the integration of three pillars of sustainable development as well as the harmonisation of national standards with the European Union, which Croatia set ahead as strategic goal.

As reflected in the Ministerial Declaration, the Environment for Europe process, having yielded positive results in Central and Eastern European countries, is to be redirected towards the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucus and Central Asia. In this respect, Croatia welcomes the adoption of the Strategic Framework for the Environmental Strategy for Countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucus and Central Asia, as a part of the environmental partnerships strategy that resulted from the Johannesburg summit.

Nevertheless, the focus on the EECCA countries in this process should not be the only one. I believe it is important to develop and strengthen further links between all areas of the UNECE region, including south-eastern Europe, as it would be conducive to environmental improvements both at national and regional level. Croatia is very active in the regional cooperation in south eastern Europe. In that respect I would like to give a particular emphasis on our successful cooperation with the Republic of Macedonia. Having accumulated considerable experience in various programmes and projects in the area of environmental protection we, both Croatia and Macedonia, are interested in sharing that knowledge and expertise with the countries of EECCA region.

I am pleased to see that the Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for South Eastern Europe, a mechanism established for the countries of South-Eastern Europe which addresses the regional environmental problems, and whose Task Force Croatia currently co-chairs, has been acknowledged in the Ministerial Declaration. However, Croatia believes the REREP programme has reached the point where it should be re-tailored, so as to better suit specific needs and priorities of the countries concerned,

respecting their differences and individual achievements. We hope the new mode of operation for the REREP will commence in the near future. The success of this programme would also contribute to a balanced, sustainable development of the UNECE region as a whole.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.