

## **Item 2**

### **The speech of the Minister of Environment Protection of Georgia – Mr. George Khachidze for the Seventh "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference Astana, 21 September 2011**

**Excellencies,**

**Distinguished delegates,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the Government of Georgia, I would like to extend my cordial gratitude to UNECE for the excellent organization of the Seventh "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference and to express my sincere appreciation to the Government of Kazakhstan for hosting this important event in Astana, the beautiful capital city.

Georgia considers the Environment for Europe process to be an efficient political framework for co-operation between the EU and non-EU member states within the UNECE region. We very much appreciate that the initiative brings clear benefits for the countries of Eastern Europe, including the Caucasus, and Central Asia through the enhancement of environmental cooperation and capacity building activities resulting in specific actions in the field of environmental protection across the pan-European region.

Georgia is internationally recognized as a resolute reformist. During 2005-2010 radical reforms were implemented in several key sectors of economy. The main aim of reform was to stimulate economic growth and prosperity through innovative schemes. Several directions for enormous potential in promoting Green Economy goals and objectives have been identified.

First, the renewable energy sources, as one of the most prominent green economy indicators, are promoted by Georgia. The State Program on Renewable Energy was approved in 2008 the main goal of which was to boost the construction of new renewable energy sources in Georgia. As a result more than 88 percent of electricity production in Georgia comes from renewable sources.

Another important direction is that Georgia already took specific steps in combating climate change and introducing green economy pathways. Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia has joined the "Covenant of Mayors Initiative of the European Union" to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It is important to emphasize that Tbilisi is the first capital of the region to join the initiative. The Sustainable Action Plan of Tbilisi consists of activities in various sectors such as transport, municipal and residential buildings, landfills, wastewater handling system, street lighting, and geothermal hot water supply.

Green transportation is one of the main sectors addressed in the green economy context. Georgia took transportation problems at national and municipal levels through streamlining particular activities. We also are launching a program that will lead to cleaner transport modes and plans to replace official traditional cars with electric ones.

It is important to emphasize that Georgia pays particular attention to the sustainable management of water. The country is extremely rich with water resources and we understand that investments into the water sector will provide major economic, social and environmental returns and, therefore, can be a building block for enhancement of Green Economy pathways.

Another key issue for Georgia is the biodiversity protection and, consequently, Georgia strongly supports the implementation of the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy. Once again, it is important to recognize the unique role of biodiversity in supporting sustainable social and economic development. Currently 7,4% of Georgia's territory is protected areas.

In conclusion, I would like to express that Georgia believes in the success of the reforms of the "Environment for Europe" process which will further increase its efficiency to promote broader environmental cooperation for sustainable development.

Thank you very much for your attention!