

Statement of H.E. Alberto Pieri, Ambassador of Italy to the Republic of Kazakhstan

Mr Chairman, Ministers and Heads of Delegation, distinguished delegates,

On behalf of the Italian Government I would like to express our gratitude and appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan for hosting this Conference in this beautiful city of Astana and to UNECE for the preparation of this important event.

Italy supports and aligns itself with the intervention of Poland on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

Since its beginning the EfE process has promoted actions in the region to safeguard the environment and health, in particular through the adoption and implementation of **regional environmental agreements**, which have been essential to address trans-boundary environmental impacts of human activities and environmental democracy, to adopt national legislation in these matters and to develop environmental cooperation in the region. Italy has always been very active in supporting implementation of UN-ECE Conventions and Protocols both participating in their governing bodies and contributing financially to their management.

Under EfE the other most important success is the set up of a regular reporting activity on the State of Environment of the region. We just had the opportunity to hear the presentation of the finding

of the **Assessment of Assessments**, and we would like to express first of all our full appreciation of the work done by the European Environmental Agency, together with its partners.

Italy commends the Steering Group led by the EEA for the excellent outcome, and in this context underlines the importance to maintain a full involvement of Central Asian countries in the present and future assessments. In this context we would also commend the contribution given by the **Central Asian Regional Environmental Center** and we strongly support its involvement as a strategic partner in the future Regular Process of assessment at regional level suggested by the EEA.

We believe that the **Assessment of Assessments** constitutes a further step forward towards the integration of different data collection, monitoring and reporting systems of the region.

For the same purposes we would also like to highlight the value of the **Second Assessment on Transboundary Waters**, that can be very helpful in addressing the issues related to water management in transboundary basins, and which is particularly on-time considering that one of the 2 focal areas for this conference is water. I would like also to remind the guidelines on **Water Supply and Sanitation under Extreme Weather Events** produced under the water and health protocol that Italy has strongly sponsored acting as one of the coordinators.

Since Green Economy is the other theme of this conference we would like to highlight that the **Aarhus Convention principles** are paramount for its development. Let me recall examples of green economy measures such the environmental impact assessment of investments and reporting exercise related to Corporate Environmental and Social Responsibility which are only effective if the Aarhus principles are respected.

The Environment for Europe process has also promoted bilateral cooperation on environment in the region. Mr. Chairman, Italy has a long-standing experience in this field with many countries belonging to the UNECE region, and that Italian enterprises have increased their presence in many countries undertaking projects aimed at improving the state of environment.

I would like, being here in Astana, to mention one initiative, which is relevant to the themes of this Conference, the “Ural River Park Project”, carried out jointly by Italian and Kazakhstani central and local administrations, universities and scientific bodies and the Italian ENI company that is now close to the completion. In this context, let me underline the crucial role played by the Kazakhstani Ministry of Environment.

Thanks to the acknowledgment by UNESCO, which is expected to be achieved soon, this Caspian site could be the first area in Kazakhstan included in the Man & Biosphere Reserve (MAB) as well as into Ramsar List of Wetlands. This project

represents a good example of how public and private sector can cooperate in safeguarding endangered marine ecosystems of the Caspian Sea going beyond the direct commercial focus of the industry's attention and care.

While recognizing the value of bilateral cooperation and private support, in the framework of the "Environment for Europe" process, we recognize the need to increase the effectiveness of the cooperation between EU and Central Asia, and to this aim we believe that we should take advantage as much as possible from the existing mechanisms: in this regard the funds associated to the EU Strategy for Central Asia, already mentioned by the Polish Presidency, should be considered as a primary source.

Italy has taken the responsibility to coordinate, together with the European Commission, the implementation of the Strategy in the environment sector; this undertaking has brought to the agreement between EU and Central Asia Countries that was reached in Rome in 2009 on a common **Platform for Environment and Water Cooperation**.

The outcomes of this conference and progress in the EfE process will provide important inputs for the allocation of the EU Strategy for Central Asia resources also in the view of the EU financial framework 2014-2020 . As a concrete example we think that the extension of the SEIS to the Central Asia region could be

well addressed making use of the resources that will be made available within the framework of the EU Strategy for Central Asia.

Thank you for your attention.