

## **Statement by Mr. Tomáš Chalupa, Minister of the Environment of the Czech Republic**

Dear Mr. President, Ministers, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

firstly, let me thank the Government of Kazakhstan for the hospitality we have all been enjoying here in the city of Astana and congratulate Minister Ashim on the **excellent organization** of the Conference. My sincere thanks also go to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe for the perfect preparation of the whole event.

The 7th Ministerial Conference was conducted in line with 2009 Reform of the Environment for Europe Process. As we can all see, it obviously helped to **make our discussions more concrete and result-oriented**. The round-tables resulted in several important conclusions, the main key words **being efficiency, increased cooperation between state authorities and business, search for tools** that would fit both economic and environmental purposes, **innovative approaches and change of unsustainable patterns**. Besides that numerous side-events showed the ample scope of environmental activities of governments, business and civil society in the pan-European region in **both the water and green economy areas**.

I am very happy that this process, which started 20 years ago in my country, by my predecessor Mr. Josef Vavroušek, who is looking upon us from heaven, brought further achievements in the form of several important pan-European conference outcomes. The Assessment of Assessments has shown us **challenges we are facing in the water and green economy** areas which need to be tackled by concrete policy measures based on reliable data. I am sure that in the Shared Environment Information System that should soon cover the whole pan-European region we found the right tool for making our information basis broader and significantly more reliable.

The Astana conference confirmed that access to safe water and adequate sanitation is still challenge in many areas in the region. The integrated water resource management needs to be further implemented. The 2nd Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters in the **UNECE** region provides a very good basis for future actions. The Czech Republic appreciates the role of the UN ECE Water Convention and its Protocol in this regard and we encourage their ratification and implementation by all countries in the region. **The action is needed at all levels**. Therefore we warmly **welcome the list** of Astana Water actions which guarantee that concrete projects will be developed and implemented.

We welcome the idea of Green Bridge Partnership Programme presented by Kazakhstan. We believe that this Programme can contribute concretely to a shift towards a green economy by stimulating investments that leads to sustainable development. We recognize that further work needs to be done in developing this project. **However, the implementation of concrete projects can be launched immediately**.

All stakeholders **must play crucial role** in this regard, mostly business and the Regional Environmental Centres (RECs) that have provided valuable assistance across the region. I am sure that the declaration we adopted here today provides a strong impetus to them as well as Governments, representatives of international organisations and financial institutions.

In the Czech Republic, number 7 has a special significance – it is believed to be a symbol of luck and good fortune. For me personally, this belief has now turned, thanks to the success of the Astana Conference, into firm conviction.

Thank you for your attention.