

Agenda item 7

**Mr. Andrzej KRASZEWSKI, Minister of Environment, Poland,
on behalf of European Union and its Member States**

Closing statement

Mr. Chairman, Ministers, Excellencies, Distinguished delegates,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

I would like to thank all of you for your active participation and engagement during the three days at this 7th “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference.

The “Environment for Europe” process provides a unique platform for exchanging knowledge about promising strategies, best practices and lessons learned, for identifying common approaches and sustainable mechanisms for environmentally friendly policies, for channeling international resources equitably and efficiently, as well as for putting forward concrete actions.

We can return home encouraged by the fact that there are increasingly common elements amongst our views, even if we do not agree on all the details. This gives us cause for optimism for the discussions ahead of us and the continuation of the “Environment for Europe” process. We are pleased to have been able to participate in this important and fruitful debate on the opportunities and challenges of three main issues: sustainable management of water and water – related ecosystems; sustainable management of water and greening the economy; and mainstreaming the environment into economic development. I am very pleased with the rich, open and interactive discussion. We have different specific proposals, but we all share a common aim to accelerate efforts and make progress towards sustainable water management and greening the economy.

We had an excellent opportunity to listen to different views on the substantive themes of the Conference and its outcomes. We shared ideas, discussed openly in a constructive manner and agreed on the next steps in the framework of the outcomes of this Conference.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

During our debate on the two round tables topics concerning sustainable water management we heard many countries sharing their experiences in implementing law, regulations, economic instruments, international commitments as well as information on new technologies in the water sector. The third topic gave us an opportunity to share our experiences of implementing green economy practices.

What is now clear is the fact that access to water, sanitation and the sustainable management of natural resources are increasingly seen as an essential element for social and economic development.

The following main factors are causing changes in water quantity, availability and quality: population growth, land use changes and energy choices, as well as climate change. It is necessary to seek ways to mitigate the impact of those factors, as well ways to adapt to a changing water environment.

Water is also a fundamental driver of sustainable development and green economy. Progress in the region can be built on various priority actions, such as multilateral environmental agreements and coalitions for water policy reforms. The important priority is to generate stable revenues for water management and water-related services, through water demand management and use of various economic instruments. Water related investments can contribute to green economy in a decisive manner. Investments in watershed services provided by wetlands and forests should be considered as they support economic development and directly contribute to green economy.

As we have noted in our recent discussions, sustainable water management and green economy are part of the broader concept of sustainable development. Greening our economies is essential, without it achieving long-term sustainable development, and in fact lasting economic growth, will simply not be possible.

The EU and its Member States strongly support the concept of green economy, by promoting greater efficiency in the use of natural resources and energy, by promoting new technologies for clean energy and cleaner production, and by supporting sustainable lifestyles, while at the same time improving human well-being, providing green decent jobs, reducing inequalities, tackling poverty and preserving the natural capital upon which we all depend. This approach integrates economic, social and environmental thinking and concepts in a highly needed way. It promotes innovation to break path dependency and it focuses on valuing, efficiently managing and investing in natural capital as a potential source of economic growth.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

The European Union and its Member States welcome the several outcomes of this Conference: the Ministerial Declaration “Save water, grow green”, the Astana Water Action, the “Europe’s Environment: An Assessment of Assessments” report, the Second Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters in the UNECE region.

We also welcome the development of a Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) across the whole UNECE region.

We wish to acknowledge again here the efforts of Kazakhstan in elaborating and presenting the “Green Bridge Partnership Programme” at this Conference.

Building upon plenary and round table discussions we have made progress towards a better mutual understanding, exchange of information and knowledge on water management and greening the economy.

The “Environment for Europe” process needs to be forward looking. The EU and its Member States will continue to be engaged in this process, and we are convinced that the outcomes of this meeting will contribute to the Rio+20 Conference. Rio+20 can provide momentum for a profound, world-wide transition towards a global green economy. We should also ensure, then, that the EfE process will contribute to implementing the outcomes of the Rio + 20 Conference.

Last but not least, on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, I would like to thank our Kazakh hosts for their hospitality, for convening such a valuable meeting, and express my sincere appreciation to all those who worked tirelessly to make this event a success.

I wish you all a safe trip back home and every success in our “Environment for Europe” process as well as in your preparations for Rio+20.

Thank you for your attention.