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Environmental Citizens Organizations (ECOs) **welcome** the fact that implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and progress of UNECE environmental performance reviews is discussed at this Conference, as both the legislative framework and monitoring of implementation on the national level are important preconditions for the overall success of the Environment for Europe process.

UNECE environmental conventions form a solid legislative foundation for a joint international effect in tackling major environmental problems in UNECE region. Therefore, it is absolutely essential that all UNECE Member States become Parties to these conventions and protocols to them. We express our deep concern on the rate of ratification, especially protocols adopted at the 5th Ministerial Conference in Kyiv. We regret that in many instances the lack of political will prevents these treaties from entering into force.

We would like to emphasise that in order for EfE to make a difference, implementation is the key factor. The value and impact of adopted decisions is undermined by weak implementation. We regret that national governments are often reluctant to implement their international obligations. We call upon UNECE Member States to meet Kiev Guidelines for Strengthening Compliance with and Implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements in the UNECE Region.

We believe that reporting under international instruments is essential to their implementation. It is also a matter of governments accountability to its own citizens, an essential part of democracy. The AC requires public involvement in reporting and this should be followed by other conventions. Another very important innovation of the AC is the right of citizens to use the compliance procedure by initiating the review of compliance which is a powerful instrument for real implementation.

Capacity building on the local level is crucial for effective implementation. International agreements are ineffective if individual citizens do not see changes in their communities. MEAs should put an additional effort to reach that level of implementation.

The effectiveness of MEAs is undermined if they donate resources to develop their work programmes, plans and strategies, but are not able to implement them because of the shortage of funding. We call upon the UNECE Member States to use the instrument of trust funds more effectively and support Convention's activities through this instrument.

Environmental Performance Reviews (EPRs) have become important instruments of assessing the effectiveness of the national environmental policy, institutional framework and management in EECCA and SEE countries. The EPRs done so far reveal that in all countries there is a huge challenge to improve the environmental situation, including the local institutional framework. We call upon the relevant countries of the region which have not undertaken EPRs to initiate them as appropriate and for others to consciously implement EPR recommendations. We would also like to stress on the importance of critical issues, bottlenecks in implementation of environmental policies highlighted by the UNECE EPR Programme and urge EECCA and SEE countries to address indicated challenges and work to implement the developed recommendations.

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