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**Sixth Environment for Europe Conference, Belgrade, Serbia**  
REC Intervention at Plenary session 2b) Implementation of multilateral environmental  
agreements and findings of UNECE Environmental Performance Reviews

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Dear Colleagues,

The Acceptance and Implementation of UNECE Multilateral Environmental Agreements in South Eastern Europe" is becoming a priority on the agenda of the governments of the SEE countries, which have come to acknowledge the importance of adhering to MEAs. However, there are still certain gaps in the record of acceptance of UNECE MEAs and the relevant protocols. Whereas Albania and Croatia are party to all UNECE conventions and most of the protocols, the other countries still have some way to go in accepting the UNECE MEAs and especially the protocols adopted in Kiev. SEE countries have had to face a range of complex challenges relevant to MEA acceptance and implementation. There is a need for further improvement and enhancement of administrative and institutional capacity to address environmental problems in the SEE region.

The ratification, implementation, compliance with, and enforcement of MEAs give rise to important environmental benefits and an improvement in the economic, socio-political and administrative situation of the parties through the application of international norms and standards, increased transparency, participatory decision making and conflict resolution. Moreover, states party to an MEA are able to access technical and financial assistance from the MEA Secretariats, multilateral sources and certain bilateral sources, in areas such as assistance for reporting, capacity building, and the exchange of experience.

The Category II paper prepared by REC with the lead of Serbia, "Acceptance and implementation of UNECE MEA in South Eastern Europe", assesses the current status and provides concrete recommendations for the way forward towards the implementation of each distinct MEA in the specific conditions of SEE. These recommendations include the following:

A systematic approach/methodology to the acceptance, ratification and implementation of MEAs should be adopted, including financial, institutional and legal assessment aspects. To this end, the main legislative and institutional requirements for compliance and the financial implications of the acceptance of MEAs should be identified. In this respect, the adoption of national strategies for implementation, national action plans, etc. could be undertaken as early as possible after ratification and greater use could be made of the technical assistance mechanisms available under the conventions.

National Implementation Plans (NIPs), which are useful tools for ensuring a strategic approach to compliance with MEAs, should be developed where relevant and appropriate. The process of developing NIPs should be based on a transparent, inclusive and participatory approach involving all stakeholders ranging from central level public authorities to NGOs, research institutes and local governments.

Cooperation at a subregional level gives the SEE countries the opportunity to face common problems, to develop institutional capacity and experience, and to comply with MEA obligations. Through regional cooperation and the establishment of networks, the countries can establish dialogue, share information, exchange experiences, and benefit from the experience of advanced countries.

I would like to call upon the donor community to consider targeted contributions to the region in terms of supporting the commitment of the countries in the SEE region to accepting and implementing the UNECE MEAs.

REC is committed to provide ongoing support to the region to promote and assist the acceptance and implementation of UNECE MEAs through continuous successful partnership with international organizations such as UNEP and UNECE, cooperation with conventions' secretariats, governments and relevant stakeholders, collaboration with the regional AIMS network of environmental experts and focal points for the different MEAs, as well as the involvement of NGOs and other stakeholders.

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