

**Ms. Rut Bízková,
Deputy Minister of the Environment,
Czech Republic**

Distinguished Chairperson,
Ladies and Gentlemen!

The Czech Republic considers the **Environmental Performance Reviews as an important and essential tool for strengthening the implementation of environmental policies** within the region. There exists significant evidence that countries undergoing this assessment and implementing the adopted recommendations, significantly contribute to a better state of environment within the whole region.

We see the **EPR programme as an outstanding instrument for countries with economies in transition to tackle their environmental disparities**. The crucial role of the EPR programme is in tailored – made recommendations that grant the assessed countries clear guidelines for further improvements. The reports help countries to set easily their own environmental priorities, and timetables for their realization. This attracts the attention of donors and can strengthen the relations with international community.

We very appreciate the fact that the **EPR Programme has been an integral part of the agenda of the EfE ministerial conferences and call for continuation of the second round reviews** assessing the progress in implementation of the recommendations from the first round.

Nevertheless, the **best recommendations** could be of benefit just in case that they are well reflected in **actions on the national level**. Therefore we invite countries to implement the recommendation and thus contribute to the harmonization of environmental policies throughout the UN ECE region.

Looking at the outcomes of the reviews it is clear that the **environment could be improved just on the condition that it is placed on the top of the political agenda, supported by allocation of sufficient financial resources.** The distribution of these means should be in accordance with clearly defined priorities.

Furthermore, the strengthened institutional capacity and **a better coordination of communication among environment related authorities would promote sustainability in policy-making decisions.**

Further steps towards improvements of the environment could be also made through the **better integration of environmental policies into other sectors and more effective and fair involvement of the civil society and the private sector and in environmental decision-making.**

The Czech Republic, as a relatively new EU member, is willing to share its experience from the transition period with EECCA countries and countries of the South Eastern Europe, to bring them closer to the EU environmental standards.

We did not go through the EPRs organized by the UN ECE, however **we could share our lessons learnt from EPRs, done by the OECD. The first EPR** for the Czech Republic of 1997 and its recommendations were applied for up-dating the State Environmental Policy of the Czech Republic, for harmonization of legislation with the EC environmental *acquis communautaire* and **for integration of environmental consideration into other sectoral policies.** Currently the reflections on the **second EPR** of 2005 recommendations assisted **to understand environmental policy as closely linked to economic and social pillars of sustainable development and good governance agenda.**

The Czech Republic has been actively involved in the UN ECE EPR programme financially and by professional staff. In 2006 and 2007 the Czech experts participated in the EPR of Serbia and Montenegro and elaborated the first chapters of the reports focusing on policymaking, planning and implementation.

In the future we are prepared to cooperate and convey our experience to other countries that will express their interest. We would be happy to provide our capacities for common efforts for better environment and for promotion of sustainable development at the national as well as the regional level.

Thank you for your attention.