



Government of Italy

Item 2 b) Implementation of the UNECE Conventions

Keynote address delivered by Mrs Giuliana Gasparri
on behalf of Mr Alfonso Pecoraro Scanio, Minister for the Environment, Territory and Sea¹

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Italian Government it gives me great pleasure to address the sixth edition of the "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference

Mr Chairman

The five **UNECE Multilateral Environmental Agreements** (MEAs) represent a unique set of instruments to prevent and reverse environmental degradation in the Pan European Region, addressing the substantial trans-boundary nature of the environmental impact of human activities.

They contribute to strengthen environmental policies and commitments at the national level. They provide the framework and the incentives for trans-boundary co-operation and burden sharing in protecting the environment. They raise public awareness of environmental issues and catalyse action. Moreover they are an unique example in the

¹ The present document is a scanned copy of a statement received on 10 October 2007 during the Sixth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" (Belgrade, 10-12 October 2007). The document has not been formally processed by the UNECE.

framework of the regional Commissions of the United Nations and represent an important legacy for the whole Europe.

Mr Chairman,

We have assisted to a number of **success stories** thanks to the Conventions. Emission of all pollutants covered by protocols to the Long Range Trans-boundary Air Pollution Convention have declined substantially in the region. The EIA Convention has introduced common procedures and provision for the trans boundary environmental impacts assessment of the projects and helped funding consensual solutions. With regard to the Water Convention there is growing interest from other regions of the world in this quite unique set of tools in international law, which can provide a global framework for cooperation in trans-boundary water cooperation. The industrial accidents convention has successfully contributed to improving industrial safety to the region. The Aarhus Convention inspiring itself to Rio Principle 10 on public participation has helped countries throughout Europe and Central Asia to take steps to strengthen their laws and practices for furthering democratization and human rights and it is considered a highly valuable example of norms related to the crosscutting issue of access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters for all regions of the world.

Let me recall that at its 61rst session, held in February 2006, the UNECE Assembly, in the framework of its institutional reform and of the redefinition of its priorities, has formally adopted the conclusion that the **environment pillar of the UNECE** (and in particular its MEAs) **is one of the most successful and important** area of activities for the UNECE Member States.

In addition the UNECE strategic framework for the years 2008-2009 for the environmental pillar foresees as a priority for the environmental pillars the strengthening of implementation and compliance of the Conventions.

Accordingly, the Countries are expecting that UN Economic Commission for Europe considers as a matter of priority the **needs of the Conventions' Secretariats**. Adequate and qualified human resources and sufficient funding to the Secretariats is important for a better services for the Conventions, also in reflection of expanding numbers of parties and tasks that each Convention has to face.

Italy is in the forefront for enhancing political dialogue and Pan European cooperation considering geographical vicinity to **SEE Countries** and historical partnership. Therefore I am convinced that the UNECE Conventions contribute to better neighbouring relations between the EU and the EECCA and SEE countries through technical multilateral assistance, advisory missions and capacity building, complementing effectively community cooperation policy in the environmental field.

An example of this procedure can be offered by the Assistance Programme of the Convention on Trans-Boundary Industrial Accidents.

Environmental issues will be more and more central while the development of the region is rapidly progressing. Think and act for the future should be the *leit motiv* of each Convention. New mechanisms and resources should be considered to face new environmental threats that are constantly emerging. As it is happening for a number of global MEAs, also the UNECE Conventions are working on it. In particular the Aarhus Convention has established an ad hoc expert group in order to adopt a Long Term Strategic- Plan for the next five year of the Convention in which vision and mission should

be highlighted. Conventions should build solid fundamentals for the present and do not stop planning for the future.

Mr Chairman

While we recognize the specific mandate of each Convention we should also reinforce **synergies** among them.

Synergies are essential in many ways. Better results can be obtained if all the Conventions are able to share among them best experiences, practices and information and organize common projects and activities. Synergies based on recommendations contained in the Kiev Guidelines for Strengthening Compliance with and Implementation of UNECE Conventions should be used in order to set equal practices and procedures across all UNECE Members States, with particular emphasis on aspects on public participation. Finally, synergies will both allow a more effective use of limited financial resources and more effective results.

Now, given the essential role played by the UNECE Multilateral Environmental Agreement, we have to consider **Implementation as the major challenge** we have to face. I recall to this audience the importance of ratify and put efforts in implementing MEA's, including compilation of national reports. A strong commitment both from Governments and all stakeholders is necessary to achieve meaningful results on these aspects. A strong support to foster the **capacity building** of those countries that have difficulties to fully implement the basic requirements of the Conventions has to be address. Persistent environmental problem can be tackled through strengthening environmental institutions of those countries, integrating environmental policy into other sectors and promoting strategic regional initiatives. Specific mechanisms have to be put in place to assist countries with the development and implementation of their national environmental policies

Last but not least, **UNECE MEA's model** as an effective instrument to protect the environment and for strengthening the international cooperation would be a **valuable** one **to export to other regions** of the world that face similar problems, sharing best practices and information.

Mr Chairman

UNECE Multilateral Environmental Agreements have showed that effective results can be achieved to tackle the environmental degradation in the region even using limited financial assets. Working on national institutions and administrative personnel can give excellent results.

We are here today to discuss the way forward and I am eager, dear colleagues, to hear your views

Mr. Chairman

Let me conclude by offering you, on behalf of Italy, my sincere gratitude for hosting the sixth Ministerial Conference " Environment for Europe" here in the lovely city of Belgrade. Your hospitality is a mirror of the Serbian Government's commitment to the success of the Conference.