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Minister of Education and Science, Lithuania

Honourable colleagues, organisers of the meeting, guests,

more than two years have passed since the day when in Vilnius – the capital city of Lithuania – we jointly approved the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and the Vilnius Framework for the Implementation of this strategy. I hope that the meeting in Vilnius has inspired us all for new works that should contribute to the preservation of our planet for the future generations.

During the meeting in Vilnius we have stressed that education is crucial for the readiness and motivation both of an individual and of society to deal with multiple issues of sustainable development. We have stated that provisions of sustainable development should be incorporated in formal education programmes of different stages and in non-formal education and that we should make efforts to turn education into the key initiative of the change.

Strategic documents on education in Lithuania – the Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania, Strategic Provisions for the Development of Education in Lithuania for 2003–2012, general programmes and education standards of Lithuanian schools of general education, the conception of the pupils' progress and achievement assessment, etc. – provide prerequisites for education for sustainable development. One of the priority fields in the work that we do in order to implement the programme successfully, is the improvement of the qualification of educators and of experts in different fields.

Lithuania, just like the majority of other countries taking part in this event today, has developed and approved the key element of the implementation of the Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development – the National ESD Programme for 2007–2015 – and the plan of measures for the implementation of this programme for 2007–2010. I am particularly glad to note that the National Programme for Education for Sustainable Development has been drafted in cooperation with all the ministries (a total of 11 ministries), a number of science

and studies institutions, municipalities, non-governmental and other organizations concerned.

I would like to refer to one of the measures of the aforesaid National Programme, the implementation of which has already begun – the National Agreement between the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Environment, and the environmental initiative foundation of industrial enterprises *Žalioji Karta*. By signing this agreement we have committed ourselves to combine initiatives of the environmental education and sustainable development and to coordinate actions in the framework of the implementation of these initiatives.

The formation of the sustainable development competence network in Lithuania started in 2006. Members of this network include representatives of various educational establishments – universities, schools of post-secondary education and professional training, establishments of general education, and municipal education centres, who cooperate in developing ESD activities. The first teachers–ESD consultants and the first educational institutions–ESD demonstration centres will be accredited already this autumn.

The Ministry of Education and Science is not the only one developing innovative ideas and promoting provisions of education for sustainable development in Lithuania. This work is being done in close cooperation with other Ministries, responsible for, for example, environment, social security and labour, health, transport, agriculture and other sectors. The cooperation among all the interests groups of in the field of sustainable development is also vital. The fact that we in Lithuania have the successfully operating national ESD commission, which coordinates the entire cooperation process, is particularly important in this case.

The cooperation at the international level is very important, too. It is therefore especially pleasant that today we once again have this wonderful opportunity to meet each other and share the best practice and experience of the implementation of the objectives, set two years ago in Vilnius.