

**Environment for Europe Conference  
Capacity building - "the EECCA-report".  
Thursday 11.10.07, at 09:00 and 10:00**

**Minister of Environment, Norway: Helen Bjørnøy<sup>1</sup>**

Excellencies,

We have before us two very important documents. One is the Belgrade Assessment from the European Environmental Agency. The other is **the EECCA-report from the OECD**.

The Belgrade conference is meant to be a conference on **delivery**. The EECCA-report shows us what we have achieved since the Kiev conference in following up the environment strategy for the EECCA-countries.

I'm pleased to see that we have made progress in several key areas, including **water and sanitation**. But, there are still millions of people in the EECCA countries without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. There is still a very high rate of child mortality and many health problems.

Let us now do our part of the job. Let us make this region **an example for other regions**. Then our work can pave the way for a new effort to tackle the global freshwater crisis.

Norway has supported **several water projects in Central Asia**. For example, we are supporting UNDP's work of making a water resource management plan for Kazakhstan, in cooperation with the government of Kazakhstan. In order to follow up the plan at the local level, we are involved in safe drinking water projects in several villages in Kazakhstan. We also support a project to improve water and sanitation in Tajikistan.

But clean and dependable water supply does not depend on pipes and treatment plants alone. It also depends on **maintaining forests and ecosystems** in the catchment area. For Norway, supporting World Wild Life Fund in the protection of the "Crying Mountain"-rainforest in Georgia, is not a sign of idealism. Rather, it is a realistic investment in the basis for long term development and welfare in the region.

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<sup>1</sup> The present document is a scanned copy of a statement received on 11 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.

What we have achieved since The Kiev Conference is of great importance. We must continue to focus on **implementation** to bring forward further concrete results from the Environment for Europe -process. Norway will continue to support this process. Let us build on the important achievements and take **concrete action** to promote our common agenda of clean water for everyone!

Thank you.