

Ms. Rut Bízková
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Distinguished Chairperson,

Ladies and Gentlemen!

We acknowledge that the **main geographical focus of the “Environment for Europe” process should be focused on countries of the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia** (EECCA countries). Therefore, we underline the **importance of the EECCA Environmental Strategy for addressing this priority**. May I recall the efforts of then Ministers of the Environment of Ukraine and Georgia who were leading personalities behind successful preparation and adoption of this ambitious Strategy.

The Czech Republic supported the development of the EECCA Environmental Strategy from its beginning. Bearing in mind that the **Strategy has provided us with many opportunities for both bilateral and multilateral cooperation** with the EECCA countries, we still understand its role as an inspirational, **basic framework document for further, more concrete and more focused actions**.

However, the EECCA Report has shown that despite of serious effort made, only **limited progress has been achieved since the Kiev Conference**. There are **many reasons** for that – but based on our experience, let me mention at least couple of the most important ones.

First, the main precondition for any successful activity is a **strong ownership, intensive involvement and active leadership of those who want to benefit from it**. A more intensive commitment should be expressed by the EECCA countries’ political leaders for successful implementation of the Strategy, not only by the environmental sector. While preparing e.g. the Czech Republic for the EU

Membership, we had the strongest “engine” in our own wish to do that as fast and well as possible.

I am aware of many difficulties that EECCA Countries face, but still, we can see the **potential of the Strategy to inspire, to serve as a benchmark for further actions taken by the EECCA countries supported by their partners.** We all need to be patient and not to stop using this unique instrument just because its implementation has not yet been fully successful.

The EECCA Environmental **Strategy has been never created to be a “dogma”** – it was designed to help EECCA countries in **shaping their own activities** (including setting priorities at both national and local levels) and **communicating with partners** how most effectively their contributions could be placed in support to the EECCA environmental priority programmes.

The EECCA Strategy and its implementation should take into account also other current processes on global level, to seek synergies with them and to take active part in them – e.g. climate change agenda, biodiversity, chemicals management, soil protection, sustainable consumption and production etc.

Therefore, bearing in mind **common responsibility within the EfE process for environmental protection and support of sustainable development in the region,** we call for more active participation of the EECCA countries.

Limited set of priorities defined by the EECCA countries, **tailored to concrete sub-regional needs and conditions** but based on the EECCA Environmental Strategy could be helpful to improve implementation gaps in the EECCA countries.

EECCA countries represent enormous diversity – from members of the most developed part of the world - G8 to countries classified as economies in transition and even developing countries under some multilateral environmental agreements. Therefore even **diversified partnership among them should be supported to speed up the solution of most disturbing problems of environment and of sustainable development.**

As a relatively new member state of the EU **the Czech Republic confirms once again its readiness to share our experience from our transition period and harmonizing the national legislation with the *acquis communautaire* with the EECCA Countries.**

Once again, let me highlight that **the political will and strong “self-commitment” seems to be one of the key preconditions for any success.** It is not enough to have excellently developed documents only. **Each strategic vision needs to be followed by identifying limited number of overarching, long-term priorities, setting concrete goals and identifying most effective instruments and other means how to achieve them.**

Clear financial strategies should be designed, a sound legal and institutional framework installed and both financial and human resources allocated for each of the top priority goals defined. But even those steps would not be leading to success without **a regular, transparent and sincere communication with all stakeholders** including the general public and private sector.

Finally, let me highlight that **we strongly support further steps of EECCA countries made towards the implementation of the EECCA Environmental Strategy** and believe that **these efforts supplemented by the assistance of the donor countries would contribute to ensuring better environment in the UNECE region.**

Czech Republic will continue to provide assistance to the EECCA countries through bilateral (official development assistance projects) **and multilateral channels** (e.g. special funds and programmes under the Global Environment Facility, World Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the EU funds, Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, specific activities under different multilateral environmental agreements including of that of the UN ECE and etc.). **Donor and recipient countries and institutions should follow an integrated approach and promote**

synergies amongst all these instruments in order to secure most efficient implementation of the EECCA Environmental Strategy.

Presently, **the Czech Republic is allocating almost 25 % of its ODA to the Eastern and Southern Europe (more than 430 mil. CZK in 2006, i.e. 21 mil. USD).**

Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and Kazakhstan belong to the Czech major recipients in the world. We are active in **environmental projects in particular in Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Ukraine.** In this connection I would like to turn your attention to the panels located in the lobby of this conference hall, describing specific Czech ODA activities in of Serbia. Similar activities take also place in the EECCA countries.

Apart from development cooperation there are **other environmental activities in this region under the auspices of the UN ECE through the voluntary contribution of the Czech Republic focused on the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements** e.g. in Moldova (2 projects – industrial accident, water protection).

The Czech Republic became a co-founder of the newly established Regional Environmental Center (REC) of Moldova. Our experts are also active within the European Water Initiative, OECD working groups, etc.

Another forms of our cooperation are **memorandums on cooperation – with some countries of the EECCA region.** It covers concrete topics such as legislative support, exchange of experts, know-how transfer.

We hope that these activities are contributing to the implementation of the EECCA Strategy.

Thank you for your attention.