

Mr. Kimmo Tiilikainen, Minister of the Environment of Finland

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to associate myself with the statement of Portugal on behalf of the European Union.

We came to Belgrade asking ourselves if there is a future for the Environment for Europe process, and what its future should be. In the plenary and the numerous side events we have heard the results of different activities as well as visions for the future to promote environmental protection in our region. The conclusions are clear: there is a need and use for this kind of multilateral process.

At the pan-European level we still need a forum to identify major challenges of environmental protection and to reflect these issues in our decision-making. The political level is where we can open a dialogue between different sectors and stakeholders in order to increase the commitment to environmental goals. Policy frameworks like the Environment for Europe also provide a ground for projects and increase the coordination regarding different activities.

However, we have to review critically which the issues are where this process brings added value and after this focus our work on these. It has been noted several times that the process should be needs-driven. The priorities should reflect the changes in our region. We are responsible to our citizens that we achieve results and real improvement in the environment. It is therefore the process which should be flexible, and not vice a versa.

The organizational changes proposed in the declaration will help in rationalization of the process, and these are fully supported. Sub-regionalization should be more integral part of the process also with regard to the preparatory stages.

The future work would benefit a lot, if the national and local level work would be more effectively involved in the process. This needs national dialogues with and within the countries, inviting all relevant ministries in the work. There is a wide experience on the work with national actors in the OECD Task Force, as well as in the Secretariats of the ECE conventions. More coordinated efforts by the donors would be of great importance to contribute to sectoral integration and increase the efficiency.

The message of the non-governmental organizations for the future of this process is that the Environment for Europe process should continue - it shows positive outcomes in the whole UNECE region. I see that the NGOs have an important role in the process and I feel that all of us share their concern that implementation still remains a main challenge.

Mr Chairman,

I would like to thank you and the organizers of the Belgrade Conference for providing us with a friendly atmosphere, which promoted the successful result of this Conference.