Mr. Hans Christian Schmidt, Minister for the Environment, Denmark

Dear Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank Ukraine for hosting this very important conference; important for the people in our region; important for the environment; and important for the future process where we need to put action behind our words. I would particularly like to thank you, minister Shevchuk. You and your highly competent staff have done a tremendous job. Thank you very much.

At our last conference in Aarhus in Denmark we agreed to focus our efforts on improving the environment on the EECCA countries. Although in some areas the state of the environment has improved, we now know from the Kiev assessment that:

- Life expectancy of people in polluted and impoverished areas in some EECCA countries is less than 50 years. It has fallen dramatically within the last decade.
- Secondly contamination of drinking water is significant in the EECCA countries and there is a low level of wastewater treatment.
- And thirdly air quality standards are still exceeded to an alarming extent

These examples confirm once again that what is needed in the EECCA countries is more than words. In Johannesburg only 9 months ago we committed ourselves to follow-up with actions at national and regional level. In our region, we have now taken the first important steps.

I welcome that the ministerial declaration puts a strong emphasis on action:

- The EECCA Environmental Strategy clearly indicates which problem areas to focus on and which directions to take.
- The EU Water Initiative supports the implementation of the water related issues of the EECCA Strategy and has already materialised in concrete actions.
- And the three protocols will help us solve environmental problems across borders and the public has right to participate in this joint effort.

Meeting the millennium goals – to halve by 2015 the proportion of people without access to water and without access to sanitation – is a huge task in the EECCA region. Cost estimates can be as high as 40 billion Euro.
We have environmental financing strategies as a strong tool to help countries in their environmental planning and to help secure long-term sustainability of the infrastructure investments has received such attention in the ministerial declaration. And we have attached financial funding to these strategies.
One could of course always have wished for more. We are in Kiev and I do not think we can underesti-
mate the issue of nuclear safety. Furthermore, on the Kyoto protocol, I would like to repeat the call made
in Johannesburg for countries that have not yet ratified to do so without further delay. And finally, I
strongly believe that in the European region each of us should set clear and ambitious, time-bound targets
on renewable energy.

But even if some of us believe we should have had stronger language on these issues, I think we can be
proud of the results we have achieved here in Kiev.

In for to five years time, at our next meeting, I look forward to being able to say that what we have done
here in Kiev, really made a difference.

Thank you.