MR. BØRGE BRENDE, MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, NORWAY

Mr. Chairman,

Today's Ministerial Declaration is very important and I believe it is a great achievement.

- Important because it sets out a clear direction;
- Important because it commits us to concrete and ambitious targets;
- Important because it furthers peace and stability in the region by promoting good, long-term management of natural resources and mechanisms to ensure strengthened cooperation between countries.
- An achievement because we have managed to agree on the main challenges, on the main reforms and that strong policies are needed despite the fact that our region reaches more than halfway around the globe and is so diverse. We have agreed despite the fact that standards and policies that have been developed in one part may not be well suited in another part.

On some issues, however, we still agree to disagree. For our part, Norway would have preferred stronger aims on energy, phasing out nuclear installations, but we are very pleased on having reached agreements on cooperation on water management and the future of the Environment for Europe process.

It is really absurd that we meet here, close to the site of the Tchernobyl catastrophe and cannot agree to a paragraph on nuclear safety.

I cannot understand why anyone would be against phasing out unsafe nuclear installations. This is a matter that concerns everyone in the region; even in far away Norway we still have to spend millions to reduce radioactivity from Tsjernobyl in sheep, and Tchernobyl is not the only installation we need to worry about.

Norway certainly supports such phasing out of unsafe nuclear installations and the statement on nuclear safety we have made here today together with EU and others expresses some of the concerns we have.

What we have achieved here is of great importance. We must now concentrate on what is even more important. We must accelerate implementation and bring forward some tangible results of the Environment for Europe process as a whole. Norway will continue to support the process and we welcome the continued efforts of all parts of the region in furthering our common aims.

As some of you may know I have just accepted the chairmanship of the UN Commission for Sustainable Development. The CSD has taken up the challenge of reviewing how the Johannesburg commitments are being realized. We will examine national and international efforts, partnerships and agreements. We will address problems and gaps, and identify priorities for action.

I am particularly pleased that the first priority will be water and sanitation and that the CSD has decided to have a regional foundation for their biannual policy discussions. This gives us an opportunity to present the full extent of experience from the ECE region:

- We can show the connection between what we have achieved, and legal, administrative and economic reform.
- We can draw on experience from cooperation between industry, citizens organizations and governments.
- We can show that a good, clean and dependable water supply not only depends on pipes and treatment plants, but on maintaining forests and ecosystems in the catchment area.
- We can point to the importance of small lakes, wetlands and riverbanks.
- We can show that avoiding emissions from industry is as important as cleaning urban effluent.
- And most important of all, we can show that this is an essential part of developing a modern society free from poverty. Today's Ministerial Declaration can make an impact even beyond the region where we belong. It gives a strong impetus to the implementation of the Johannesburg commitments. Let us now build on the important achievements here in Kiev and take concrete action to move our common agenda forward in the years to come.

Thank you.