Mr. Chairman, it has been a pleasure and privilege for the United States to participate in this conference. We wish to thank you, Mr. Minister, for the wonderful warm hospitality, your leadership, and the superb manner in which your people organized the conference to be a success.

During the last few weeks in preparation for this conference, I must confess there were some in our government who expressed an opinion that because of philosophical and policy differences, this forum would be burdened with discord and thus unproductive from our perspective. Mr. Chair, thanks to your leadership we will be happy to report to our colleagues in Washington that this has been a very positive and most successful conference.

One important accomplishment is a recognition in the declaration that we can share common goals and high expectations for environmental protection and sustainable development. Yet there can exist different approaches and strategies to attain success. We think the recognition of that is a significant outcome of this conference. As appropriately noted by several speakers, another noteworthy milestone is a recognition of an urgent need to move beyond lofty words in documents, to action and implementation.

The United States is proud of the collaborative projects and partnerships we have been involved with in the region with many of you gathered here at the Kyiv Ministerial. Our commitment to Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Eurasia is clear and we will continue to commit to investments to raise the quality of people’s lives, remediate problems, build governance capacity, and increase health care and environmental stewardship.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, the United States is committed to the highest standards of nuclear safety. In recent years we’ve spent over $700 million to share our expertise with and help Ukraine and others on this critical issue. We recognize that nuclear safety is essential for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and we seek the highest safety standards in such uses. The United States will continue to work closely with our partners in the region on this critical issue.

We salute you, Minister Shevchuk, and thank all of our colleagues in the Environment for Europe effort for all their hard work, good will, and commitments to ensure that the positive progress, commitment to action, and optimism of Johannesburg, as well as the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and other fora, which have been enhanced here in Kyiv, promises to continue to ensure a legacy of a better future for current and future generations in this region. Thank you.