

Item 2

The “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference
21-23 September 2011
Astana, Kazakhstan

**STATEMENT
BY
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UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS
and
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION
FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

It is an honour to address the Seventh “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference. We extend our warm greetings to delegates from the European region, in particular those which are also part of the ESCAP region.

We congratulate the Government of Kazakhstan for its success in hosting this, and several major events in the recent past. Astana is now noted for the excellence of arrangements and its hospitality.

The sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, or MCED, was also held in Astana, Kazakhstan in 2010. There were three important outcomes of the 6th MCED.

The first was the Ministerial declaration on environment and development in Asia and the Pacific, 2010. The second was the Regional Implementation Plan for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific 2011-2015. The third, which brings ESCAP to this forum today, was the Astana “Green Bridge” Initiative: Europe-Asia-Pacific Partnership for the Implementation of “Green Growth”.

The strategy to bridge these two regions was conceived at the 6th MCED, and it is a pleasure to see the Astana “Green Bridge” Initiative at another critical stage in its development. After its endorsement at the MCED, the 67th Session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific issued resolution 67/3 on the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development, welcoming the Initiative and encouraging participation in its implementation.

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The Asian and Pacific region therefore stands ready to partner with Europe through the Astana “Green Bridge” Initiative. This important Initiative of the Government of Kazakhstan aims to stimulate trans-regional cooperation to promote green growth. It reflects the position of these two regions on the world stage, their close relationship, and the great potential that lies in taking action together.

We are also pleased to note that, once approved, the “Green Bridge” Partnership Programme is earmarked to be proposed as an inter-regional contribution to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development to be held in June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro. We expect member states to discuss this proposal at the upcoming *Asian and Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development*, to be hosted by the Government of the Republic of Korea on 19-20 October 2011.

As indicated by the Note by the Government of Kazakhstan, the next steps will be the dialogue between governments on the priorities of the “Green Bridge” Partnership Programme. We are ready to facilitate such dialogue and to continue to support member states’ in furthering progress towards sustainable development.

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