



United States Department of State

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Statement by:

**Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Environment
Lawrence J. Gumbiner**

Seventh Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, September 21, 2011

Honorable Ministers and Delegates, I am honored to be here at this seventh Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference.

The United States is proud to have been a leading partner in the launching of the Environment for Europe Conferences in Dobris twenty years ago and in establishing the Economic Commission for Europe in the 1940s. We value the special relationship we have with Europe and are proud to be partners in numerous joint efforts on the environment with the UNECE member states, through regional and global processes and institutions, and bilaterally.

The United States believes that this Environment for Europe Conference should be a model for the upcoming Rio + 20 Conference, with its focused agenda and declaration. We note in particular, the emphasis on providing a strong scientific foundation to our deliberations and follow-up and the proactive involvement of civil society, and the private sector.

We know that for sustainable development and environmental protection to succeed, all elements of society must be engaged, and that a primary role of governments is to facilitate the efforts of civil society, and the private sector. A critical role of governments is to provide basic environmental information, made available in a transparent and understandable way, through ongoing environmental monitoring and assessment. This information will enable civil society to be involved in environmental policy making and determining development priorities.

The creation of a pan-European “Shared Environmental Information System,” which emphasizes the elimination of environmentally harmful subsidies and mainstreaming the environment into economic and social policy, should be a model for our efforts at Rio +20.

We also welcome the efforts of the Government of Kazakhstan to establish the Green Bridge Partnership and encourage the Kazakh government's efforts to strengthen national governance to protect the environment. We fully support their further initiative to encourage investment in green business.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, in discussing the issue of water, remarked that it, "represents one of the great development opportunities of our time. Perhaps no two issues are more important to human health, economic development, and peace and security than basic sanitation and access to sustainable supplies of water." We welcome this conference's attention to this critical issue. The tragedy of the Aral Sea has shown us the importance of managing water across competing uses and across political boundaries for the benefit of all the stakeholders within the basin. The United States has long supported efforts by countries to better manage and better cooperate on water resources. And, we are pleased to include projects with funding totaling 1.3 million US dollars as part of our contribution to the Astana Water Action. Together we need to continue to strengthen those national actions and regional organizations that serve as a platform for data sharing, analysis, and joint planning for the development of shared water resources.

Finally, Mr. Chairman we thank the government of Kazakhstan for their efforts hosting this important event. We are most pleased to have had the opportunity to visit your beautiful country and the lovely city of Astana.

Thank you.