STATEMENT BY MR. LEONTY KHORUZHIK,
MINISTER OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION OF BELARUS

Dear Madam Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen!

Environmental problems on the European Continent are not limited to one individual country but concern the whole region and sometimes the whole World.

Experience learnt by our countries within last 10 years shows that economic, political and environmental reforms are interrelated and complementary processes. For this reason the transition process in our country opened unique opportunities to integrate environmental issues into the decision-making process at all the levels and economic sectors.

The Environmental Action Plan for Central and Eastern Europe adopted in 1993 contained a number of recommendations on how to achieve such integration. Now, after 10 years it is evident that it played an important role in strengthening environmental protection in CEE countries and contributed to the efforts of some of them to join the European Union.

On the other hand the environmental situation in EECCA countries still remains serious and we think that the progress achieved towards reorienting the «Environment for Europe» process to the EECCA region is to be more extended, intensified and specified.

We constantly seek new forms and types of cooperation, build up and launch new elements of environmental policy that would allow us to handle existing environmental problems in a more effective way. And the necessity to develop further the environmental policy that will contribute to sustainable development of individual EECCA state and the European region as a whole is a driving force for the this Environment Partnership Strategy.

We recognize the approval of the Pan-European Environment Partnership Strategy as one of the most important decisions that must be made at this Conference.

We understand that environmental problems existing in EECCA countries are specific to every state. At the same time they have common features and therefore may have similar solutions. It should be pointed out that budgets of our countries do not have enough available capital to cover long-term investments. It makes impossible to ensure transition to effective environmental management in a short run and could be achieved only by developing and strengthening long-term cooperation with state-partners and attracting investments to key sectors and areas identified in the Environmental Partnership Strategy.

In the last 10 years our country have been actively shaping a new environmental policy with regard to strategic goals of sustainable development. For this reason the seven objectives identified in the Strategy go in line with the environmental policy priorities of the Republic of Belarus.
We are sure that the approval of the Strategy will contribute to building up a new type of partnership and developing new forms of bilateral and multilateral cooperation to knowledge transfer, as well as to attracting investments to implement a number of programs that will be developed in the framework of the Strategy.

We would like to emphasize that active involvement of national institutions as well as international organizations, experts, the private sector, non-governmental organizations is a must to implement the Strategy. All of them must and will play a considerable role in the further development and implementation of the Strategy.

We would like to urge all UNECE states to approve the Environmental Partnership Strategy developed in the framework of the «Environment for Europe» process as it will lead to improving the state of the environment in the countries of our region, and its successful implementation will be an important step towards the United and Sustainable Europe.

Thank you for your attention.