Thank you, Madam Chairperson,

Lithuania is one of the countries, which benefited and continuing to benefit from the intensive co-operation with countries in the region. Starting in 1990, bilateral and multilateral partners played a very important role both in environmental policy development and in its implementation. A real partnership example was shown during the accession process. Since 1997, Lithuania has gone a long and difficult way to approximate the legal basis to the EU legislation and to implement the EU requirements. This process would have been much more difficult if Lithuania had not received significant technical and investment assistance from the EU countries. Today, when the accession process is nearly completed, I would like to take the opportunity to express my thanks to these countries once more.

After the successful referendum on the EU membership, we really have a good basis for continuing our partnership, enriching its forms and content.

It is trivial to say that environmental problems do not have barriers; solutions can be found only by concentrated actions, and with neighboring countries first of all.

Lithuania is placing a very high priority on co-operation with our neighbors at implementation level, in particular, on river basins management and the protection of the sea. A good partnership is based on willingness to co-operate. I do not think that we lack it. But it is also based on trust and commonly accepted responsibilities to implement the international agreements we are parties of and commitment to conclude the ones, which are necessary for achieving our targets. Partnership is a possibility, but partnership is a responsibility as well.

Lithuania is gradually changing from a recipient to a donor country. We would not be able to allocate substantial financial resources yet. But we have accumulated rich experience in policy development, implementation and investment planning, institutional strengthening measures and many other areas listed in the Environment Partnership Strategy, which we fully support.

Madam Chairperson, let me finish with inviting once more our neighboring countries to open mutually useful and responsible co-operation in solving environmental problems of joint interest.

Thank you for your attention.