



JOINT STATEMENT

of the 14th Meeting of the Environment Ministers of the Visegrad Group Countries

24-25 May 2007, Prague, Czech Republic

The Minister of Environment of the Czech Republic, Minister of Environment and Water of the Republic of Hungary, Minister of Environment of the Republic of Poland and Minister of Environment of the Slovak Republic, representatives of the Visegrad Group Countries

- reaffirming the importance of the cooperation of the Visegrad Group countries in the field of environmental protection within the European Union
- bearing in mind the conclusions of the European Council in March 2007 in the field of climate protection and energy policy and realizing the need for a coordinated action
- expecting political agreement on the waste directive at the forthcoming meeting of the EU Council on Environment
- being aware of the need for coordination of their joint positions on the priorities in relation to the mid-term review of the Sixth Environment Action Programme of the European Community for 2002-2012
- considering the continuation of the process „Environment for Europe“
- appreciating the participation of the Minister of State of the United Kingdom, Mr. Ian Pearson as a special guest for the topic of climate change and energy

have agreed as follows:

1. Climate change and energy policy

The Ministers exchanged views on the importance of the issue of climate change, and they agreed that an immediate action in global scale at all levels to combat climate change is crucial. They underlined that not only measures to reduce global emissions but also adaptation measures must be taken.

The Ministers agreed that economic instruments should play a key role in reducing the greenhouse gas emissions in a cost effective manner. The Ministers also agreed that increasing the share of renewable energy sources and increasing energy efficiency are important policy areas for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and that these policies should be supported.



The Ministers agreed that national contributions to the common EU's emission reduction target for 2020 adopted by the recent European Council must be done on the basis of clearly set criteria and comprehensive analyses of the national circumstances and achievements in relation to the Kyoto Protocol obligations of the individual Member States.

The Ministers discussed the possibility of a proposal for a joint project focusing on specific measures to increase energy efficiency and savings in the Visegrad Group countries to be submitted to the Visegrad Fund (Annex I).

2. Directive on Waste

The Ministers expressed concerns about repeated cases and continuous attempts of illegal and long-distance shipment of waste.

The Ministers recalled that they agreed at the 13th Meeting of the Environment Ministers of the Visegrad Group Countries in Košice on 4-5 May 2006 on reservation on the proposal regarding the municipal waste incinerators re-classification to recovery facility.

The Ministers underlined that the powers of Member States to control and limit waste streams flowing across their borders should be strengthened in order to fulfil EU and national goals of waste policy e.g. by increasing level of recycling. It is especially important for new Member States, which start to build new waste treatment installations.

The V4 countries and several other Member States have already called for the possibility of Member States to apply the proximity and self-sufficiency principles to support and encourage national waste management planning, inter alia national recycling programmes or objectives, contributing to the prevention of undesirable shipments of waste on the European Council meeting (Brussels, 27 June 2006).

The Ministers agreed that the provisions of the Directive on Waste should lead to stopping the undesirable movement of waste among the EU Member States and also to broadening the scope of the principles of self-sufficiency and proximity.

The Ministers also agreed that the above mentioned basic position points will be presented at the EU Council on Environment on 28 June 2007.

The Ministers agreed to mutually inform one another on development of the situation in the field of illegal waste shipment.



3. “Environment for Europe” (EfE) process: discussion on the future of the process and preparations for the 6th UN ECE Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” to be held from 10 to 12 October 2007 in Belgrade, Republic of Serbia

The Ministers highlighted the major focus of the Belgrade Conference on evaluation of the progress made in implementation of agreed commitments from previous EfE Ministerial Conferences and on utilization of lessons learnt. The Conference should clearly define roots of obstacles in implementation and non-compliance. Besides significant thematic issues such as evaluation of state of environment, implementation of MEAs, sustainable consumption and production, the Ministers support Pan-European wide biodiversity issues as integral part of the Belgrade Conference agenda.

The Ministers exchanged views on further development of the EfE process. Bearing in mind the positive impacts of the five EfE Ministerial Conferences organized hitherto they called for continuation of the EfE process.

The Ministers acknowledged that the EfE process has to be efficiently adapted to present political situation and be able to face new global, regional and sub-regional challenges. Nonetheless, they supported more focused future agendas reflecting emerging issues and having special regional relevance.

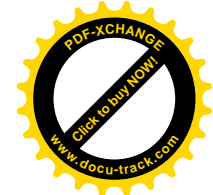
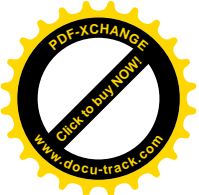
They also agreed that the process should remain pan-European wide and differentiation is needed more in terms of needs than in terms of geographical areas.

The Ministers considered the commitments agreed hitherto and their further implementation to be more important than creating new instruments, strategies and partnerships.

The Ministers acknowledged the focus on EECCA (Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia) as well as on SEE (South Eastern Europe) countries within the EfE process. Nevertheless they encourage stronger ownership of these groups of countries in the EfE process and would welcome more articulate and redefined priorities in their strategies.

The Ministers recognized the role of the EAP (Environmental Action Programme) Task Force, PPC (Project Preparation Committee). In the context of the EfE process they also expressed their appreciation of the work of the Regional Environmental Center in Szentendre and its national offices in many Central and Eastern European countries.

The Ministers underlined the importance of the Visegrad countries’ traditional role in bridging the East and the West within the region. They considered the support of the EfE process to be an important component of the European Neighbourhood Policy of the EU that should contribute to bring non-EU countries closer to EU environmental standards.



4. New Generation of Environmental Policy

V4 environmental ministers expressed their concern on the present status and the role of environmental policies in the EU.

The Ministers welcomed the Commission's document on the Mid-term review of the EU's 6th Environmental Action Programme and called for a critical assessment of the environmental policy framework, in particular the 6th EAP.

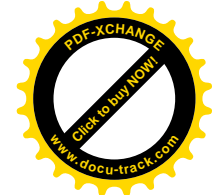
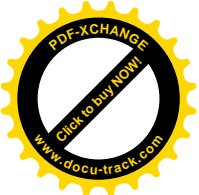
From the various recent assessments it turns out that there is an ongoing degradation of the natural resources, loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services and in general there is an increasing interference of all societies with global environment.

Obviously the present environmental policies and the state of their implementation is not enough to mitigate and stop these adverse tendencies. Environmental concerns are not appropriately integrated in sectoral policies. Generally we have segmented approach to the various environmental problems and many times we deal separately with the various environmental media.

The Ministers affirmed the need for a substantial improvement of the environmental policies within the European Union and the need for much better integration of environmental concerns in other policies, such as agriculture, forestry, transport and energy policy. The Ministers are convinced that a much more synergic approach is necessary by taking into account the various interlinked environmental processes.

More specifically the Ministers expressed their high concern on the unsustainable use of natural resources and financing nature protection.

This more critical approach should be clearly reflected in the follow-up of the mid-term review of the 6th EAP and in more general in the overall policy-making of the EU. The Ministers underline also that in the new generation of environmental policy more integrated approach to environmental challenges is needed, taking into account all three dimensions of sustainable development (environmental, social and economic) and synergy between different activities.



5. Any other business

The Ministers agreed to initiate the continuation of the discussion by the Environment Council on improvement of the EU's GMO related procedures.

The Ministers discussed and acknowledged the position on sustainable mining initiated by Hungary as attached to this Joint Statement (Annex II).

Done in Prague on 25 May 2007

His Excellency Mr. Martin Bursík
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Environment
Czech Republic

His Excellency Mr. Gábor Fodor
Minister of Environment and Water
Republic of Hungary

His Excellency Mr. Jaroslav Izák
Minister of Environment
Slovak Republic

His Excellency Mr. Jan Szyszko
Minister of Environment
Republic of Poland



ANNEX I

Proposal for a joint project in the field of climate change and energy

The main objective of the project will be mitigating emissions from greenhouse gases and thereby mitigating the human effects on and the impacts of climate change.

Considering social, economic and financial aspects of climate change, the project will have three basic aims:

- increasing energy efficiency and savings by introducing specific measures
- increasing the share of renewable sources of energy by introducing specific measures
- preparation of specific information campaign in order to increase public awareness (e.g. energy efficiency in households, etc.)

The project will fall in the category of “scientific exchange and research” of the Visegrad Fund specifications.

The costs will include:

- expert work – experience exchange, preparation of technically focused studies
- focused workshop with the participation of all the Visegrad Group Countries
- travel expenses of experts
- translations, printing, promotion

The Ministers will appoint responsible experts to elaborate the project proposal to be coordinated by the Czech Republic.

The project proposal as well as elaboration of the budget will be submitted by all Visegrad Group Countries to the Visegrad Fund.

The project proposal will be submitted within the deadline (15 September 2007) according to the rules of the Visegrad Fund.



ANNEX II

Joint position of the Ministers of Environment of Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia on sustainable mining

Recalling joint actions of the Ministers of Environment of the Visegrad Group addressing the major environmental concerns in the region:

- Bearing in mind the precautionary approach, as set out in Principle 15 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development,
- Recalling chapter 34 of Agenda 21 on environmentally sound technologies
- Recalling paragraph 23 of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation adopted by the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002,
- With reference to paragraph 14 b) d) j) on risk reduction of the Overarching Policy Strategy of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management,
- Appreciating the joint ENVSEC initiative of UNEP/UNDP/NATO/OSCE and recalling the Declaration of the High Level Panel of the sub-regional conference on „Reducing Environment and Security Risk from Mining in South Eastern Europe and the Tisza River Basin (2005)
- Taking note of the developing legislation on mining in the EU:

The Ministers:

- Express their interest in application of environmentally sound technologies in course of development of national economies;
- Also express their concerns specifically about the hazardous technologies used and planned for mining activities at various sites in the region entailing considerable environmental hazards with potential transboundary consequences;
- Appreciate the measures of the Czech Republic on the general ban of cyanide technologies with the amendment of the Mining Act 44/1988 in 2000;
- Take note of the relevant initiatives within the EU and the UN system and express their joint position on the promotion of sustainable mining and strongly encourage the development and application of safer alternatives;
- Agree to promote this joint position at national level as well as within the EU and in their international relations.