

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Peter Ziga,
Minister of the Environment of the Slovak Republic**

(Rio+20, plenary session, 22 June 2012)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to extend to you the greetings from the highest representatives of my country and the Government which is very strongly committed to pursue the objectives of sustainable development adopted at the previous global summits and meetings. We met here both to look back to what extent we have succeeded in turning our efforts and ambitions in practice and to set out realistic objectives for the future.

Looking back to what has been achieved we have to admit that despite some partial improvements and positive changes, these still remain insufficient or regionally limited. Hunger and poverty, unbalanced economic development, loss of biodiversity or climate change, depletion of natural resources, energy and wastes – these are only some examples of areas where our efforts have to be strengthened and implementation of effective measures accelerated. What we decisively need is a strengthened cooperation on the international level - addressing the persistent challenges related to sustainable development for all regions and countries, in particular those facing the most serious economic, environmental and social problems. The economic stability and sustained economic growth, promotion of social equity, and protection of the environment are important for eradicating poverty and improving human well-being.

On the global level the functional institutional system constitutes one of the basic preconditions for achieving goals and targets laid down in the international conventions, agreements and treaties. Such a system must be well embedded in the system of the United Nations so that it can address the most serious problems of sustainable development in a comprehensive way. On the other hand we should avoid situation of duplication of our activities and concentrate our human and financial capacities on dealing with the most threatening problems we face. Therefore we support the idea of strengthening the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) so that it integrates all three main pillars of sustainable development – economic, environmental and social. This is a proper and more effective way

than creating a new administrative body where new procedures and capacities should have been created.

When speaking about strengthening the institutional arrangements of sustainable development we need to promote the environmental pillar by transforming the United Nations Environment Programme to a specialised agency, with predictable, stable and adequate funding, dealing with the global environmental issues. We are convinced that such an approach has a potential to effectively contribute to enhancing synergies among multilateral environmental agreements, promoting the science-policy interface, building on existing international instruments, assessments, panels and information networks and providing capacity building to support countries and facilitate their access to technology.

We are of the opinion that we should adopt measures on the regional level but with global impacts. Within the European Union we are focusing now on an approach based on preparation of macroregional strategies. Such strategies, so far defined for the Baltic and Danube regions, identify the major obstacles and challenges and lay down concrete measures and actions to foster sustainable development in the countries involved. Such an approach could be a good example also for other countries in various world regions which could in this way better address their specific problems under specific conditions.

One of the fundamental tasks we have to solve is to find a balance between the economic development and the protection of scarce natural resource. The concept of green economy, if accompanied by concrete and specific measures, offers a unique opportunity to provide for economic development together with rational use of resources, dealing with social issues, especially promoting employment.

As far as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are concerned we support the outcomes achieved in the framework of the negotiations on the level of the European Union and other forums. The new Sustainable Development Goals should be linked to the Millennium Development Goals. In the meantime we have to make every effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals so as to avoid any overlap with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Ladies and gentlemen, let express hope that this summit will become a real milestone in bringing our lives closer to the sustainability.

