

Check against delivery

CSD 12

Tuesday 20th April, 2004 Conference Room 1

16.30 – 18.00 hours

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding Countries, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia, the Candidate Countries Bulgaria, and Romania, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro align themselves with this statement.

We would like to express our gratitude to Secretary of State Beckett, both for her role at the Regional Implementation Forum and for her comprehensive and succinct Summary of the inputs to that Forum. The strength of this Summary is that it encapsulates the key obstacles and constraints on progress towards the targets for water, sanitation and human settlements with a penetrating analysis of challenges that we face in addressing them.

The summary also outlines the main examples of best practice with wider applicability and about which many countries shared their practical experiences. We also note that many of the priorities identified were consistent with those identified in other regions, and in particular Africa.

The Forum acknowledged the disparity in our region between wealth and poverty and those without access to safe water and basic sanitation and those still living in slums or without adequate accommodation, problems which are also shared with other regions. What is most heartening is the assessment that the UNECE Region can get on track to meet its commitments, as well as the strength of the sub-regional

processes for the promotion of sustainable development and making progress on meeting their commitments.

The EU also recognises the major role the UNECE region has to play in global efforts to achieve sustainable development.

We are strongly committed to meeting the MDGs in particular MDG 7 to ensure environmental sustainability and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI), both within the EU and in assisting the sub regional processes and other countries of the region, and a number of initiatives are already in place and/ or are being developed to give practical effect to our commitments.

Secretary of State Beckett has given us a good synopsis of the outcome of the Regional Implementation Forum and at the risk of repetition I would like to highlight a number of priorities from the EU point of view.

WATER AND SANITATION

Integrated water resources management (IWRM) including ecosystem and river basin approach is the priority and for which we have an ambitious legislative, time based programme. We still have obstacles and challenges, including implementing the programme and dealing with emerging issues such as flood management and drought, particularly in the Mediterranean region. There is also a need to raise the profile and priority attached to the provision of adequate sanitation by raising awareness of the interlinkages between the three themes

Within the UNECE region

The main initiatives for the facilitating the application of IWRM and meeting the agreed targets and commitments in an UNECE context are

- participation by the EU in the implementation of the Helsinki Convention in relation to transboundary waters, its protocols, and
- the EU Water Initiative. The EU Water Initiative EECCA (Eastern European, Caucasus and Central Asia) component is accepted as a partnership between EECCA and EU in implementing the water aspects of the EECCA Environmental Strategy. An assessment of the status of progress in the EECCA region towards the IWRM and water efficiency plan target and of the cost for the EECCA countries to comply with the water supply and sanitation targets has been initiated.

HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

The highly urbanised character of most EU Member States reinforces the need to prioritise sustainable urbanisation.

Despite our relative wealth, homelessness or inadequate housing remains a problem for the most marginalized in parts of the EU. Economic growth and accompanying patterns of production and consumption must be made more sustainable. We also need to address the spatial dimension of urban settlements vis a vis rural depopulation.

Fundamentally, the EU strongly favours a model of compact city planning, already in evidence in many European urban centres, which aims for a high quality of life for Europe's urban citizens. Under this model, effort is focused on hindering urban sprawl, the implementation of transport policies which maximise the mobility of the whole population through efficient public systems and non-motorised transport means, improved environmental performance and the promotion of social integration.

These objectives were reflected in the European Commission's 1998 Communication, "Urban Development in the EU, a Framework for Action", which has four policy aims * strengthening economic prosperity and employment, social inclusion and urban regeneration, improving urban environment, and good governance and increased participation of local actors and citizens.

Currently, this policy framework is being reinforced through the development of a Thematic Strategy for the Urban Environment, which will promote an integrated holistic approach across EU policies affecting the quality of urban areas."

Means of Implementation

In the wider global context as well as within the UNECE Region, means of implementation, including the mobilisation of financing from all sources remains a key challenge. The adoption of sustainable development strategies by 2005 or poverty reduction Strategy Papers which integrate the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development are critical in this regard. Adequate and strengthened governance, including through capacity building and accelerated technology transfer are also essential.

Poverty eradication, and protecting the natural resource base, changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, health, gender equality and education are also important cross cutting issues.

(Further speaking point, if appropriate)

I am pleased to advise that on World Water Day, 22nd of March, the European Union agreed, for its part, to set up a special facility to promote access to clean water and sanitation for people in countries in Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific regions. A formal decision will be taken at the joint Ministerial meeting between the ACP Countries and the EU in May. The suggestion is to have a first allocation of €250 million approved with a commitment to decide on the mobilisation of a second allocation of €250 million by March 2005 at the latest.