

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to address you in two inter-related capacities. The first is as the Chairman of the *Environment and Security* initiative—the regional partnership between United Nations and other environmental and security agencies that helps the new EU member states, and countries of the Balkans and the Commonwealth of Independent States, to manage cross-border environmental risks. The second is as the Director of the United Nations Development Programme’s Regional Centre for Europe and the CIS, which has been working closely with the Government of Germany to strengthen the impact of the international community’s activities in Central Asia.

The discussions during the past two days have very appropriately focused on the key substantive linkages between environment, security, and development issues. They have recognized that coordination, partnerships, and multilateralism must be at the heart of responses to these challenges. As a number of speakers have pointed out, the regional *Environment and Security* (ENVSEC) initiative—a partnership between UNDP, UNEP, OSCE, UNECE, NATO, and the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe—is playing an important and growing role as a multilateral institution for coordination and partnerships. Founded in 2003, ENVSEC helps governments and other partners prevent natural disasters, mitigate environmental hot spots, and build trust across national and community borders in the new EU member states, the Balkans, and the CIS. ENVSEC’s portfolio today includes some 87 projects, with a budget of some \$50 million.

More than projects and budgets, ENVSEC is a repository of partner organisations’ environmental, security, and the development expertise. By coming together based on the respective partners’ comparative advantages, that expertise is utilized to create a coherent process from assessment to “address-ment”. The importance of these capabilities—apparent for example, in UNDP’s *Human Development Reports* on global water issues (in 2006) and climate change (in 2007), in UNEP’s Poverty and Environment Initiative, and in OSCE’s support for the Aarhus centres that connect environmental sustainability with civil society development—has been richly illustrated by the discussions of the past two days.

We all recognize the importance of multilateralism, coordination, and partnerships in responding to these challenges. But Europe, and the global community, are also looking for leadership—particularly to the Government of Germany during its EU presidency, and particularly in Europe’s “wider neighbourhood”. Here, the fate of Central Asia—Eurasia’s poorest region, whose development and security prospects are threatened by environmental and security risks—assumes special importance. UNDP, together with other UN and regional partners, has since 2002 been working closely with bilateral donors including EU Member States, as well as international financial institutions and other bilateral donors, to craft a more cohesive, effective international response to the Central Asia’s development challenges. The next step in this cooperation

is the 29-30 May Bishkek conference on regional cooperation in Central Asia, which UNDP is pleased to cosponsor with Germany. Environmental, security, and development issues—including the ENVSEC initiative—will feature prominently in this conference. So will the search for common approaches to issues of democracy and human rights that recognize both the universal values embodied in United Nations Charter and Central Asia’s national and regional specifics.

Nowhere is the application of the EU’s “soft power” more important, and potentially more influential, than in Europe’s “wider neighbourhood”. As the experience of the 12 new member states shows, EU accession and integration processes—be they within the framework of SAA, ENP, or other processes—magnifies this soft power manyfold. As development, environmental, and security organizations acting in the wider neighbourhood, the ENVSEC partners understand the significance of these processes, and wholeheartedly support their implementation. This support can take the form of capacity development, research or analysis. Our inter-agency cooperation can also accelerate the consolidation of these processes to the ground. This support can take the form of working as a trusted intermediary to reduce tensions and find joint solutions to common environmental, security, and development challenges. And it can take the form of support for the development cooperation activities of the new EU member states—which, as “emerging donors”, have important transition and development expertise to share in the wider neighbourhood.

We look forward to working in an “ever closer union” with the European Commission, and member states, to build a better future for both the EU and countries of the wider neighbourhood.

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