



Statement by First Deputy Prime Minister/Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia at the Ministerial Conference on Innovative Solution to Pollution in South and South-East Europe:

"Minister Trivan,
Mr. Tripathi,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great honour and pleasure to welcome you, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, at this important event devoted to finding innovative solutions to reduce pollution in South and South-East Europe, co-hosted by the Serbian Ministry of Environmental Protection and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). I would like to take this opportunity to extend particular thanks to the Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea Protection of Italy for supporting the convening of this conference with the primary aim of contributing to the joint activities undertaken by the entire international community in the context of one of today's most topical issues.

I would also like to thank UNEP for choosing no other than Belgrade as a venue of one of the major regional events in this field, having recognized the Republic of Serbia's commitment to environmental protection.

I would like, first and foremost, to stress that the Republic of Serbia recognizes the importance of today's topic, at the national as well as regional and global levels, as demonstrated, among others, by the establishment of the Ministry of Environmental Protection as a separate department in the Serbian Government, directly responsible for dealing with matters related to this very important field.

One of the key principles the Government of the Republic of Serbia is guided by in developing its national environment policy is the respect for the right of the public to take an active part in this process. In this regard, in order to promote the participation of civil society, including non-governmental environment organizations, the Government has set aside in its budget funds to co-finance civil society organization projects, thus significantly raising the awareness of the

importance of environmental protection, promoting knowledge on related subjects through informal training programmes, and helping the implementation of projects focused on addressing particular individual problems in the field of environmental protection.

Aiming to promote and strengthen the dialogue with civil society, five Aarhus Centres were established throughout Serbia in order to facilitate our citizens' participation in the decision-making process and to ensure better access to information on related issues. In parallel with national institutional capacity-building, we are acknowledging the importance of enhanced regional cooperation on environmental protection, which should primarily be seen as a catalyst of progress in the process of aligning the national legislation and practices of EU aspirant countries with the environment policies and standards applicable in the EU Member States. In this regard, the Republic of Serbia has taken decisive steps to meet the requirements under Chapter 27, with a view to preserving natural resources, promoting green economy and taking care of public health.

With regards to global environment cooperation, we underline the importance of the United Nations, and in particular the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) – the major international multilateral mechanism for the establishment and development of cooperation in this field. In the past period, UNEP has made an unambiguous contribution to the improvement of global environment policies by adopting multiple declarations and initiatives.

I cannot over-emphasize enough the importance of further efforts on the part of the Ministers representing the Member States in the process of formulating the Ministerial Declaration and drafting resolutions for the upcoming sessions of the 2019 UN Environment Assembly, under the theme "Innovative Solutions for Environmental Challenges and Sustainable Consumption and Production".

Having in mind the fact that the success of implementing the planned goals will largely depend on sources and mechanisms of funding, we believe that it is necessary to ensure equal access to both global and regional sources of finance, which will figure as one of the main agenda items of this conference. Finding new and innovative methods of funding, public private partnerships and incentives to be provided by the state are some of the open issues that need to be addressed primarily within the UN system.

Finally, I wish you success in your discussions and activities during your two-day stay in Belgrade.
Thank you."