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Ministerial Environment Forum
Nairobi, 20 – 22 February 2012**

Ministerial consultations

**High-Level Symposium: Environmental Change and Global Responses in
2012**

(Monday 20 February, 3-6 p.m.)

Statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States

Introduction

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. The Acceding Country Croatia aligns itself with this declaration.

GEO 5

We attach great importance to environmental monitoring, assessment and early warning. Keeping the environment under review is a central feature of UNEP's mandate and one of its most important functions. The results of UNEP's activities in this field highlight the global relevance of environmental issues and point at the same time to global responsibilities.

In this regard, we welcome the fifth Global Environment Outlook report, the UNEP Foresight Process and the recent report *Keeping Track of Our Changing Environment – From Rio to Rio+20*. They provide therefore an important basis for the Rio+20 Conference to be held in June this year.

We welcome the improvements made regarding the GEO report, especially in terms of linking it closer to both the Medium Term Strategy as well as to internationally agreed environmental goals and targets.

We support the key findings of GEO-5 and consider that the Summary for Policy Makers is an important document taking into account that the GEO process is a significant contribution towards strengthening the science-policy interface. The report shows that we are witnessing an unprecedented change of our common environment.

We support GEO-5's call for a strong and reliable evidence base. We agree that there is a dire need for reliable and consistent data, information and ongoing assessments on the state of the environment and the need to make these accessible and understandable for policy makers and civil society. In this respect, we also welcome the Eye on Earth initiative and the development of UNEP-Live.. In establishing a platform for sharing information, UNEP-Live can help to provide the evidence base on which to assess these changes. This initiative is very much in line with the EU shared environmental information system (SEIS) which has been developed to strengthen environmental reporting and to support decision making.

The current speed of implementation of measures with regards to water resources, land-use, oceans, biodiversity, chemicals and waste, the atmosphere and energy does not match the current speed of environmental change. For this reason, we welcome the fact that GEO-5 focuses not only on assessing and measuring problems but also on investigating the solutions.

We consider the findings of GEO-5 an important basis for the discussions on Green Economy and International Environmental Governance within the coming days and in the preparatory process for Rio+20.

In the Green Economy realm we fully endorse the whole range of recommendations of GEO-5, such as holistic policies addressing the entire life cycle of products and policy options aimed at removing environmentally harmful subsidies. However, simply replicating or up-scaling current policies alone will not suffice if we want to make real progress at Rio+20.

In light of Rio+20 we underline the crosscutting nature of production and consumption processes, of urbanization and globalization and the need to design environmental policies and goals having also positive impacts on human development.

Green economy

We believe that the world is facing multiple crises that are interlinked but also provide an opportunity to rethink the current perception of growth, inclusion and how we utilize our scarce resources and that the key answer to solve the crisis is enhanced resource efficiency as a core element to in the transition to a green economy.

Therefore the EU and its Member States believe that one of the main operational outcomes of the Rio+20 should be the adoption of concrete and specific goals, objectives and actions at international level that can substantially advance the transformation towards a green economy.

Institutional framework for sustainable development

We have been consistently emphasizing since 2005 that the environmental dimension of the IFSD must be strengthened. In this regard, we reiterate our strong support to upgrading UNEP into a specialized UN agency for the environment, based in Nairobi, with a revised and strengthened mandate and universal membership, supported by stable, adequate and predictable financial contributions and operating on an equal footing with other UN specialized agencies.

Rio+20 and beyond: responding to the challenges

Rio+20 should be more than a stock-taking exercise of progress and gaps since 1992: we should aim at achieving an action-oriented outcome.

Rio+20 should mark the start of a profound, world-wide transition towards a green economy and a strengthened global institutional framework for sustainable development, and that the outcome document should be a focused and forward-looking political declaration setting out a shared vision for change, as well as goals and actions at international level to be achieved within agreed time frames.

Final remark

I'm looking forward to fruitful discussions with a view to build a contribution that brings added value to the Rio+20 Conference, in particular as regards the environmental pillar of sustainable development.

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