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Statement on behalf of the European Union

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(check against delivery)

Madam Chairperson,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

*) Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

This statement covers all sub-items of the items 53 and 54, including sub-item (e).

Allow me to begin by reiterating the European Union's firm commitment to joint international efforts to implement the outcomes of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development and the main findings of the 2005 World Summit on Millennium Development Goals to protect the natural resource base, achieve sustainable patterns of consumption and production, and safeguard the Earth's climate, land, atmosphere, water and biodiversity.

Environmental reform

Multilateral action is indispensable for addressing the environmental challenges and threats faced by all countries. The EU considers the informal consultations during the first semester of 2006 under the chairmanship of Mexico and Switzerland, as an important starting point to a process which should eventually result in a decision for a substantially stronger and more efficient framework for international environmental governance. Therefore, the EU calls for an early resumption of the discussions on environmental governance in the framework of the General Assembly.

In this context the EU would like to reiterate its belief that the Nairobi based United Nations Environmental Programme should be strengthened, with a revised mandate, supported by stable, adequate and predictable financial contributions, and operating on an equal footing with other UN agencies. An upgraded UNEP would best respond to current and future environmental challenges and would be a global centre of excellence, a leader, a normative body and a cost-effective collaborator and service provider for the environment. The EU believes that upgrading UNEP to a specialised agency is the best means of achieving these objectives.

The EU is keen to pursue this broad agenda defined by the 2005 Summit, because halting and reversing environmental degradation is not only a global environmental objective, but is also key to poverty reduction, sustainable development, economic growth and security and, in particular, it is indispensable for the achievement of all Millennium Development Goals. We are particularly

looking forward to the forthcoming report of the High-Level Panel on System-Wide Coherence for action-oriented recommendations to improve coherence of the UN operational activities in development, humanitarian assistance and environment.

Agenda 21 and CSD

The EU supports the Secretary General's recommendation to deepen our commitments to sustainable development by redoubling the efforts to implement Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. The EU also notes with great satisfaction that efforts have significantly increased in the area of education for sustainable development as well as in launching a promising dialogue with the private sector for sustainable development.

The EU attaches great importance to a successful outcome of the CSD 15. We expect the CSD15 to provide us with a forum for achieving workable policy solutions in all the four themes as well as a better insight into the inter-linkages among them and their impact on sustainable development.

It is our aim to reach full agreement on meaningful and concrete policy decisions to expedite implementation of commitments related to the current thematic cluster.

The EU promotes a results-oriented approach before, during and after CSD 15. We are working towards a CSD 15 decision that includes an effective review and follow up to CSD 15.

Concerning energy for sustainable development, the EU sees improving access to reliable and affordable energy as critical to efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals. This is a global challenge and needs to be addressed urgently. A combination of higher energy efficiencies, renewable sources and better energy technologies for supply and consumption is required. The EU wishes to promote the integration of energy issues into national development plans and encourages other countries and regions to follow the EU example of adopting and developing time-bound national and regional targets to increase energy efficiency and the share of renewable energies in energy supply and consumption.

As regards industrial development, all countries should intensify efforts to enhance sustainable consumption and production patterns and sustainable management of natural resources. We should take an integrated approach to air pollution and related issues such as climate change, ozone depletion, energy consumption and production, urbanisation and transport.

SIDS

The EU has a long history of cooperation with Small Island Developing States in addressing their special environmental challenges and particular vulnerabilities to climate change. Recent disasters have highlighted the need to develop and strengthen effective disaster risk reduction, early warning systems, emergency

relief, and rehabilitation and reconstruction capacities in the SIDS, as well as adaptation measures and technology.

The EU believes that the Barbados Plan of Action, Mauritius Declaration and Mauritius Strategy provide a substantial and valuable blueprint for future international support and collaboration with SIDS.

Disaster reduction

The EU wishes to endorse the processes under way to strengthen the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, as invited to do by the Secretary General in his report. We agree with him that in order to better cope with hydro-meteorological hazards now and in the future, Member States ought to invest more in climate monitoring and associated hazard risk management and risk reduction activities, and include disaster reduction as part of their policies and programmes for adaptation to climate change.

The EU welcomes new initiatives and partnerships that reinforce our joint capacities to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action. The 3rd International Early Warning Conference held this spring in Bonn, Germany was an important Step in this direction.

With the support of the ISDR, countries are already preparing their disaster preparedness strategies. Several EU countries have supported the ISDR since 2001, and new ideas are being implemented within the EU. We are pleased that the World Bank is reinforcing its operations in the area of disaster reduction in very close consultation with the ISDR.

We should develop tools to measure levels of investment in preparedness in particular at the national level, and we need to integrate indigenous knowledge into the design and implementation of preparedness measures and programmes.

Climate change

The Montreal Action Plan agreed at the 11th session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Climate Change and of the First Meeting of the Parties of the Kyoto Protocol in late 2005, is an important step forward. At the next meeting in Nairobi in early November, the EU would like to continue exploring with all Parties new strategies to address climate change in a way that recognizes the urgency of the problem and the scale of action required.

The Convention Dialogue gives us an important opportunity to exchange views of appropriate strategies to strengthen the implementation of the Convention. The EU is also eager to advance the discussions on further commitments for developed countries under the Kyoto Protocol, and engage in the full review of the Kyoto Protocol as required by its Article 9. The EU is ready to engage in an open and constructive dialogue with all partners and major emitting countries. We must seize this opportunity and together provide a forward looking strategy for the

future climate co-operation post-2012.

The EU is convinced that in order to meet the ultimate objective of the Climate Convention, the global mean surface temperature increase should not exceed 2 degrees C above pre-industrial levels. In order to stay below this threshold, much deeper reductions in greenhouse gas emissions than those envisaged in the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol will be necessary.

Economic development is at the heart of addressing climate change and it is not a matter of trade-offs. Without tackling climate change it will not be possible to reach our sustainable development goals. The financial effects of climate change are likely to be very damaging and very long lasting. The costs are manageable if we take urgent and serious action now, the later we wait to act, the higher the costs.

A climate policy approach should support other sustainable development goals and enhance cooperation on capacity building and transfer of technology as well as international assistance to enable developing countries manage the impacts of climate change and climate resilient development. At the national level, measures to mitigate the impacts of climate change through scaling up low carbon energy will promote poverty reduction and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

The EU recognizes that technology is key to tackle climate change. Not only do we need to develop new technologies, we must also ensure that existing and new technologies are deployed. The market plays a key role in this. We need to provide robust incentives to develop and deploy climate-friendly technologies.

Desertification

The current debate on how to strengthen the UN Convention to Combat Desertification and its implementation is of great significance, as we must reinforce our common efforts to combat land degradation and its negative consequences to poverty reduction. In this regard, we believe that the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties in Nairobi, Kenya in October 2005 started a challenging process for the drawing up of a new strategic vision for improving the implementation of the UNCCD in the next decade.

Within this context the EU is working together with other partners in the Intergovernmental Intersessional Working Group (IIWG) tasked with the elaboration of the 10 years strategic plan to enhance the implementation of the Convention. As the IIWG work will soon reach its critical stage the EU is looking forward to a constructive interaction with all the UN regional groups prior to the finalization draft strategic plan and.

The EU believes that it is of utmost importance to consider, within a development perspective, the global environmental dimension of desertification and, consequently, the need for integrating the three Rio Conventions within a synergic and mutually supportive approach.

The majority of poor people in the LDCs live in rural areas and there mainly women and children bear a disproportionately heavy burden of environmental degradation. It is women who usually end up traveling longer distances and their workload grows considerably as they struggle to collect water and fuel wood. On the other hand, women have a special potential for fostering rural development because they work with natural resources on a daily basis. The EU therefore welcomes as particularly timely and appropriate initiatives the 2006 international meetings in China and Mali on the role of women and youth in combating desertification. Several activities have been organized by the EU member countries as well in the framework of the International Year of Deserts and Desertification.

Biodiversity

The EU remains fully committed to the target to reduce the biodiversity loss by 2010 and is deeply concerned that the loss is continuing at an unprecedented rate, as highlighted by the alarming findings of the UN- Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. This assessment also shows clearly that the life-supporting machinery of nature is damaged and ecosystem services provided for humankind are deteriorating.

We need to strengthen national conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and find ways and means to overcome obstacles and to assist in the implementation of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans. We must in particular support, where applicable, the integration of the implementation of those plans into nationally owned development programs. We also must establish and strengthen effective mechanisms to monitor progress towards the 2010 target.

As the Secretary General notes in his report, progress was made in the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the third session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, held in March 2006 in Curitiba, Brazil. Parties instructed the ad hoc open ended Working Group on Access and Benefit Sharing to complete its work on the elaboration and negotiation of the international regime on access and benefit sharing at the earliest possible time before the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in 2010.

It was most noteworthy that for the first time in Curitiba, Ministers and business leaders established a dialogue with more than 300 participants, and Parties to the Convention adopted a decision in support of engaging the private sector in the implementation of the Convention.

The EU also recognizes the key role of the Convention of Biological Diversity in supporting the work of the General Assembly with regard to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. The EU is convinced of the need for integrated approaches in these areas beyond

national jurisdiction, including the establishment of marine protected areas and immediate action against destructive practices.

UNEP

The UNEP 2006 Governing Council attracted a record number of Ministers of Environment and heads of states. Despite the important decisions taken, it was our impression that many delegates felt a need for a more focused and clearer role for UNEP as the foremost environment pillar of the UN system. The EU welcomes the appointment of the new Executive Director of UNEP, Mr. Achim Steiner, who will receive our strongest support in guiding and strengthening the organization to meet future challenges. It is essential that UNEP continues in mainstreaming environment in the agenda of the UN system as well as within civil society and the business community.

The EU considers the adoption of the Strategic Approach on International Chemicals Management (SAICM) a major achievement. We also note that the first steps to rationalize, consolidate and better coordinate multilateral environmental agreements have been taken within the chemicals and wastes cluster. We welcome the decisions on synergies and strengthened cooperation between the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions.

We emphasize our commitment toward the implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan on Technology Support and Capacity Building which will provide developing countries with capacities to protect the environment nationally and globally, and serve as a tool for strengthened international environmental governance.

HABITAT

State of the World's Cities report for 2006-2007 clearly displays several emerging trends that will have a profound effect on the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. By 2007 more people will live in cities than in rural areas for the first time in human history: currently one third of the world's total urban population is slum dwellers (and this is forecast to increase to 1.4 billion by 2020). The EU, therefore, endorses with enthusiasm the Secretary General's recommendation to accord high priority to integrating improvement in the lives of slum dwellers into national development strategies and poverty reduction strategies for attaining the Millennium Development Goals.

Madame Chairperson,

The European Union anticipates constructive and forward looking discussions in the 2nd Committee on the critical environmental challenges we are confronted with. You can rely on our support to your efforts towards a successful end result.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.