



## **DECLARATION ON COOPERATION ON ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP**

1. The Ministers for Environment of the EU Member States, the Ministers for Environment of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries, the EU Commissioner for Environment and the EU Commissioner for the European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement gathered in Luxembourg on 18 October 2016;
2. Recalling:
  - a) The joint Declarations of the Eastern Partnership Summits in Vilnius (November 2013) and in Riga (May 2015) in which environment was identified as a priority for cooperation;
  - b) The EaP Informal Ministerial Dialogue on Environment that took place in Minsk in June 2015;
  - c) The joint Communication of the High Representative and the European Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions "Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy" of 18 November 2015;
  - d) The Association Agreements and Partnership and Cooperation Agreements between the European Union and respective Eastern partners;
  - e) The Outcome Document of the UN Summit on Sustainable Development of 2015 entitled "Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development";
  - f) The Paris Agreement on Climate Change;
  - g) The Council Conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Ministers on European climate diplomacy after COP 21 of 15 February 2016 and the related EU climate diplomacy action plan for 2016;
  - h) The Work Programme of Platform 2 2014-2017 which includes the EaP Panel on Environment and Climate Change;

- i) The outcome of the Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference in Batumi (8-10 June 2016) in particular the “Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy”, the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy as well as the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air;
- j) Common environmental and climate change challenges and needs in the EU and EaP region as well as on-going work in other relevant regions;
- k) Progress made in the area of environment and climate change through policy dialogue and cooperation between the EU, its Member States and EaP partners, supported by EU assistance and projects, including those carried out jointly by international organisations;

### 3. Stressing:

- a) That environmental and climate challenges are transboundary interdependent by nature, and therefore require a holistic approach to address them. Given the geographic proximity of the EU and EaP countries and their shared environmental assets, strengthened transboundary cooperation and joint action on air, forests, land and soil, nature and biodiversity and water resources, including seas, are needed;
- b) The need for cooperation among, and the active engagement of, governments, local administrations, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders to address environmental and climate challenges;
- c) The importance of cooperation between ministries for environment and ministries for other sectors, such as agriculture, forestry, transport, health, economy, energy, finance, territorial development/regional development, and education, to ensure the effective integration of environment into other policies;
- d) That the Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy states that the EU (i) will support a resource-efficient economy by addressing environmental challenges such as degradation of and competition for natural resources, and (ii) will seek greater attention to the climate action both of the EU and of the partners themselves;

- e) The importance of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals;
- f) The aim of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change to ensure a decisive global response to the threat of climate change in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty, in enhancing the implementation of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, including its objective;
- g) The need for full implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the commitments under the Agreement to achieve a balance between anthropogenic emissions by sources and removal by sinks of greenhouse gases;
- h) The importance of ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems and the protection of biodiversity, when taking action to address climate change;
- i) The need to protect the environment as a provider of a wide range of ecosystem services, in particular protection of soil and water resources, improvement of air and water quality and removal of greenhouse gases;
- j) The need to shift towards sustainable and integrated management of natural resources, as well as to sustainable consumption and production in line with circular economy principles;
- k) The opportunities that environmental protection offers in particular to the private sector and industry to stimulate economic growth, foster innovation, create jobs, improve the quality of life for all citizens and for ensuring a sustainable future;
- l) The need for investments in energy efficiency, renewable sources of energy, and restructuring of subsidies and tariffs taking into account needs of socially vulnerable consumers, as a contribution not only to energy self-sufficiency but also to effective climate action;
- m) The growing environmental and climate-related threats and impacts in the EaP in particular to vulnerable areas and ecosystems, and the need to continue building coherent systems of protected areas;
- n) That the EaP Panel on Environment and Climate Change should be a forum to drive, oversee and promote cooperation and initiatives on environment and climate action between the EU and the EaP countries, including in partnership with the EaP Platform on Energy Security and other relevant bodies;

- o) The contribution of EU, International Financial Institutions (IFIs), and international organisations (UN, OECD and others) through their respective activities on the environment and climate change including through EaP flagship projects; such as EaP GREEN and CLIMA East;
- p) The role of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in environmental protection, in promoting enhanced regional dialogue, advocacy and cooperation and improving the responsibility and commitments of governments;
- q) The contribution of EaP Civil Society Forum and Regional Environment Centres (RECs) to the work of the Panel on Environment and Climate Change;
- r) The role of global and regional Multilateral Environmental Agreements, and bilateral agreements on the environment and climate action;
- s) That synergies with other relevant regional and bilateral initiatives, as well as with EU macro-regional strategies, have to be taken into account;
- t) The importance of strategic environmental assessments and environmental impact assessments as cornerstones of good environmental governance, and the need for transboundary and regional cooperation in these areas;
- u) The need for good environmental data in line with Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) principles across the region, with experience shared through EEA and Eionet member states;
- v) The need to define priorities and build national capacities to prepare sustainable projects to attract financing environmental infrastructure in the EaP region by IFIs and the private sector through public-private partnership where appropriate;
- w) The need for adequate resources to address environmental challenges in the region and to fulfil commitments under bilateral, regional and multilateral agreements;
- x) The usefulness of EU institutional support tools such as twinning and TAIEX, as well as regional and bilateral programmes on environment and climate action;
- y) The role of education for environmental protection and sustainable development including through the Education for Sustainable Development Process;
- z) The negative effects that conflicts have on the environment and sustainable development;

- aa) The need to add a deeper political dimension to the cooperation on environment and climate action in the Eastern Partnership including building synergies with processes which the EU and EaP are part of;
- bb) The usefulness of high-level meetings of environment and other relevant ministers, to provide a strategic framework for cooperation within the EaP and share experiences, best practices and solutions;

4. Declare to:

- a) Pursue regional cooperation on environment, climate action and sustainable development in the Eastern Partnership framework and strengthen, where relevant, the implementation of environmental chapters of the bilateral agreements between the EU and EaP countries;
- b) Foster the role of the Panel on Environment and Climate Change in identifying solutions for common environmental problems in the region;
- c) Cooperate on implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, based on both public and private action, including in conjunction with the European External Investment Plan;
- d) Cooperate on implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and our commitments to meet its long-term goal; and enhance strategic collaboration with civil society organisations in the context of the Global Climate Action Agenda;
- e) Cooperate in the area of environmental governance and promote the transition to a green and a circular economy making best use of already existing regional frameworks, initiatives and programmes, and the benefits and opportunities that it offers for economic diversification, resource efficiency, climate neutrality and sustainable low emission development with a view to achieving tangible results;
- f) Increase actions to ensure the effective enforcement of legislation and fight against illegal activities that have an adverse impact on the environment;
- g) Cooperate for the ratification and effective implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements, including UNECE

environmental Conventions, as well as other commitments taken under international fora;

- h) Support the promotion of the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy initiative, green cities and sustainable urban development to achieve the green economy goals;
- i) Support mainstreaming of environment, climate change and sustainable development objectives into all policy areas and enhance cross-sector and inter-Ministerial cooperation;
- j) Aim for the adoption and effective implementation of SEA and EIA procedures at national level and in a transboundary context in line with the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA;
- k) Support the involvement of civil society in decision-making, strategic planning and implementation, and results' monitoring of environmental policy, programmes and plans, in line with the Aarhus Convention;
- l) Facilitate discussions between the EU, national governments and CSOs on setting and achieving concrete objectives of environmental reforms in the EaP countries;
- m) Further cooperate with RECs, recognising their role in the region;
- n) Support efforts in improving and sharing environmental information in line with the principles of SEIS, in order to ensure transparency, accountability and support evidence-based decision-making, including monitoring and reporting the implementation of SDGs;
- o) Tailor assistance from the EU to the EaP partners on environment and climate change issues according to common priorities and needs, based on a strategic sectoral approach;
- p) Actively engage in, and enable effective implementation of, on-going, new and future projects on environment and climate action such as twinning projects and EU funded regional projects EaP GREEN, EUWI+ and CLIMA East and take further steps to demonstrate their benefits;
- q) Continue to work together with the IFIs to ensure that all partners engage in a planned strategy to reduce wasteful energy consumption and increase efficiency particularly in the residential and transport sectors;
- r) Foster synergies with other relevant regional processes such as for the Southern neighbourhood, South-eastern Europe, and Central Asia;

- s) Ensure that national administrative structures are equipped to meet environmental and climate challenges, including where possible through enhancing capacity building;
- t) Raise awareness among and cooperate with relevant stakeholders, in the implementation of the provisions of this declaration building on their past and on-going work carried out in the area of environment and climate change at regional and national level;
- u) Meet in two years to assess progress on cooperation between the EU and EaP partners;
- v) Task the EaP Panel on Environment and Climate Change to draft an action plan to implement the provisions of this Declaration.