

## Statement of the Co-chairs

### Third Annual Meeting of the GREEN Action Task Force (Bratislava, 22-23 October 2018)

#### Chaired by

**Mykola KUZYO, Deputy Minister of Ecology of Ukraine and  
Jürgen KEINHORST, Head of Cooperation with Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Africa and the Middle East,  
Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety, Germany**

We thank the Slovak Republic for hosting this year's Annual Meeting of the GREEN Action Task Force in Bratislava on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of October 2018. The engagement by the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic as an active Vice Chair has been a great asset to the Task Force. The Ministry has been the warm and generous host of this meeting, including organising the wonderful meal at the historic castle with spectacular views of the city, which all Task Force members appreciated. This year, in its capacity as President of the Visegrád 4+2 Group (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovak Republic + Bulgaria and Romania), the Slovak Republic helped the Task Force to bring together a wider range of OECD countries, including those from the Visegrád 4+2, with the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA).

The Bratislava meeting in particular, provides a special opportunity to celebrate a quarter century of the Task Force's contribution to environmental policy reforms in the countries of EECCA. It is also very symbolic that this Task Force is coming back to a country where the process of Environment for Europe was initiated in 1991, that time known as Czechoslovakia. We note that work of the GREEN Action Task Force, and the EAP Task Force as it was known before, has supported policy reforms and implementation on the ground, and contributed to improving environmental quality and social welfare while creating opportunities for sustainable economic growth and business development in the region.

We are also pleased to see the greater level of engagement of the Ministries of Economy in the work of the GREEN Action Task Force since its rebranding after the 2016 "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference, while maintaining the high-level of involvement by the Environment and Energy Ministries. We also recognise the involvement of public and private financial institutions, which are increasingly involved in the Task Force work as well as the representatives of the civil society organisations.

We welcome a range of regional-, national-, and city-level initiatives on green growth presented by the EECCA countries, which show their strong commitment to greening their economies. We recognise that good progress was made with the implementation of the GREEN Action Task Force Programme of Work for 2016-2018. We welcome, in particular, on-the-ground support to the EECCA countries in reform implementation in collaboration with the governments, local institutions and their development co-operation partners.

We recognise a range of examples including: the continuation of policy dialogues on green growth in Georgia and Kazakhstan; design of public investment programmes for cleaner urban transport in Kazakhstan, Moldova and Kyrgyzstan; country reviews of green finance mobilisation in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan; launching work on facilitating the development of national strategies for water resources management in Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia and Ukraine; and finalising the work on the economics of water security in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. This work in particular demonstrated the benefits of regional dialogue and exchange with a study tour from Tajikistan to Armenia to study the application of tariffs in the irrigation sector, and another study tour for Kyrgyzstan to examine application of surface water use charges.

We also acknowledge the contribution of the GREEN Action Task Force work to the advancement of voluntary commitments under the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy (BIG-E) made at the "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference in 2016. We note that the Task Force has enhanced strategic partnerships with international organisations, especially the UNECE and UN Environment, as well as other development co-operation partners including international financial institutions.

However, we cannot be complacent when we look at the environmental and energy performance of the EECCA countries. We call on the GREEN Action Task Force to work with the countries to encourage bolder, faster, and

more coherent policy reforms and implementation. This is still much needed in order to translate the EECCA countries' ambitious targets into actual "green" project pipelines and build confidence among the governments, partners, investors, businesses, and citizens.

In this context, we welcome the proposed Programme of Work and Budget for 2019-2020 and its endorsement by the members of the Task Force. We underline the importance of addressing new and emerging priorities of the Task Force members, such as: integrating sustainability aspects into financial-sector regulations; regional analysis of sustainable and resilient infrastructure development; environmental consideration in the extractive industry operations; and supporting countries in their development of robust national water strategies and long-term water security. We recognise the important financial support provided to the Task Force by the European Union, Finland, Germany, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland and in-kind support of several other countries.

We note that energy transition for a low-carbon economy is an enormous challenge, especially for certain communities and sectors. We encourage the Task Force members to further co-operate with various ministries, public bodies and development partners to promote "just" transition and to play a catalytic role in developing political commitment to accelerate policy reforms. We request the Secretariat to consider ways to address this in the Programme of Work for discussion at the next Bureau meeting to support the Task Force members with smoothing energy transition for communities whose employment largely relies on the fossil fuel industry.

The kind of green transition we want cannot be realised without massive further infrastructure investments in energy, transport, buildings in line with the low-carbon and climate resilience goals. Such infrastructure projects must comply with international standards (for investment, competition, environment, social etc.). We note that there is an enormous amount of interest in mobilising private finance for green investment, and using funding from governments and development financial institutions more wisely. Functioning, stable and deeper banking sector is a precondition for economic growth and investment promotion in general, and also an important basis for green finance mobilisation. We recognise that we need green finance to flow from various different sources – domestic and international, public and private - to meet EECCA countries' massive investment needs to achieve their climate targets and SDGs.

We encourage the Task Force members to further engage with finance ministries, financial regulators and financial institutions. In this context, we welcome the new work which reflects multifaceted aspects of green finance mobilisation, including the development of domestic public expenditure programmes, review of public financial entities, subsidy reforms, financial-sector regulation, private sector finance and a better use of international development finance.

We reiterate the importance of continued efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of environmental regulations. We welcome the Task Force work on "smart" environmental regulation that can deliver policy goals in more efficient manners while also achieving equity and political acceptability. The OECD member countries have a wealth of experience with the development of environmental policies and their enforcement, which can be shared with EECCA countries. We urge the OECD to continue good cooperation with the UNECE, UN Environment, UNIDO, EEA and others, building on productive partnerships forged under the EaP GREEN project and the implementation of the Shared Environmental Information System.

We appreciate the OECD's leading role in the area of water resource management in the context of green growth, and long-standing collaboration with the UNECE. We look forward to seeing further progress made in the ongoing activities under the European Union Water Initiative project (EUWI+) for the six EU Eastern Partnership countries in 2019 and 2020. We also welcome proposed new activities by the Task Force, such as on water-related SDGs, food-water-energy nexus, water security and capacity development, and the country-level water outlooks both in Eastern Partnership countries and in Central Asia.

We express our gratitude to all of the participants for the active discussion, information sharing and feedback on the proposed Programme of Work and Budget for 2019-2020. We believe that the Bratislava meeting will not only mark a successful quarter century milestone but also represent a starting point of another successful era of further collaboration under the GREEN Action Task Force.