

JOINT STATEMENT

**from the 18th Meeting of the Ministers of the Environment of the Visegrad Group,
Bulgaria and Romania**

7 - 8 November 2011, Castle Zbiroh

Ministers of Environment of the Czech Republic, Republic of Hungary, Republic of Poland, Slovak Republic, Republic of Bulgaria, Romania

- commemorate the 20th anniversary of the launch of Visegrad cooperation,
- reaffirming the importance of the cooperation of the Visegrad Group countries in the field of environmental protection within the European Union,
- bearing in mind the previous meetings of the Visegrad Group Environment Ministers,
- noting the Program of the 2011/2012 Czech Presidency of the Visegrad Group with the main thought of the “Innovative Visegrad”,
- recalling the EU Environment Council Conclusions from 10th October 2011

Ministers have agreed as follows:

Analysis of options to move beyond 20 % greenhouse gas emission reduction and Roadmap for moving to a competitive low-carbon economy in 2050

Ministers reiterated the importance for working on a roadmap towards the transition to a low-carbon economy and stressed that any future steps need to be carefully assessed from the angle of all the potential costs, benefits and impacts on the level of individual Member States including industrial sectors in order to minimize the risks of carbon leakage and to ensure fairness and economic feasibility. Ministers decided to request the European Commission to provide the above mentioned Member State level analysis without further delays.

Acknowledging the investment needs in electricity generation sector Ministers agreed on the urgency and importance of transitional free allocation of allowances for production of electricity under Article 10c of the EU ETS Directive (2009/29/EC), in order to help modernizing the energy sector in Member States concerned with high share of coal and by this further reduce the emission intensity of power generation.

UN Climate Conference, Durban (COP 17/CMP 7)

Ministers exchanged their views on the international negotiation process towards Durban Climate Conference and underlined that comprehensive and balanced outcome within both Convention and the Kyoto Protocol tracks should enhance future cooperative actions of both developed and developing countries.

In the context of the Kyoto Protocol Ministers confirmed their openness to a second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol as part of a transition to a wider legally-binding framework provided that certain conditions shall be met under both the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol tracks. Ministers emphasized the need to deliver a solution on the use and carry-over of AAUs in a second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol that maintains an ambitious level of environmental integrity and preserves incentives for overachievement, provided that the issue of the surplus of AAUs is addressed in a non discriminatory manner, treating EU and non-EU countries equally.

Ministers expect that the Durban package will be balanced across and within both tracks and that the future global agreement on climate change must address mitigation commitments and actions by all major economies. Therefore, Ministers agreed that current global mitigation pledges are insufficient and all major emitters should work together to address the mitigation gap.

Ministers underlined that the world has changed since 1992, when the Climate Convention has been adopted and any consideration of the EIT status should be linked to a more general debate on the status of Parties under the UNFCCC.

Ministers agreed that balanced outcome in Durban includes a proposal of an effective design for the Green Climate Fund.

Ministers agreed that domestic offsetting mechanisms are useful and cost-effective means to reduce GHG domestically and improve energy efficiency. They agreed to further invite the European Commission to elaborate on the rules and procedures for domestic project activities envisaged in the Article 24a of the ETS Directive, which would enhance mitigation actions in non-ETS sectors.

New EU financial framework and cohesion policy including future environmental policy

Ministers exchanged their initial views on the future **Multiannual Financial Framework** as regards environmental policy issues. Ministers also agreed on further cooperation and discussion over the Commission's proposals.

Existing experience with using of the European funds

Ministers exchanged views and lessons learned with the current cohesion policy and preparations for the new programming period.

International context of the V4 cooperation (Rio +20)

Ministers highly appreciated the political message articulated in **the EU Environment Council conclusions on Rio+20** adopted on 10 October 2010, welcomed the interest of the European Parliament in the Rio+20 expressed in its resolution from 29 September 2011 and the valuable discussion of the conference "Sharing Green Economy Best Practices towards Rio+20" held in Warsaw on 11-12 October 2011, as well as the Contribution by the EU and its Member States to the UNDESA. Ministers agree that the Rio+20 offers unique opportunity for our mutually interdependent world to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development at all levels.

The Visegrad Group Countries, Bulgaria and Romania believe that general principles and goals agreed at previous major summits on sustainable development are still valid and that the main objective of Rio+20 is to give a renewed impetus to implementation of practical instruments at all levels, which would catalyse real benefits for daily life of people in the long-term perspective.

Bearing in mind experience of the Visegrad Countries, Bulgaria and Romania with profound restructuring of their economies in the 1990s, the Ministers firmly believe that the transition to a green economy should take into account all key economic, social and environmental aspects in a balanced manner. The transition should be based on a holistic approach, leading particularly to energy efficiency and savings, diversification of energy sources and increase in renewables, and to sustainable consumption and production in all spheres. A mix of available instruments should be used, i.e. economic, legal, information and voluntary, including support to research and development and international and transboundary collaboration.

Ministers agreed on the need for improved efficiency and coherence across the UN system, including a revision of the roles of UN institutions. The Visegrad Group Countries, Bulgaria and Romania promote strengthening the environmental pillar of international governance by establishing a specialised UN agency for the environment based on UNEP with a revised and strengthened mandate, supported by stable, adequate and predictable financial contributions.

Ministers also highlighted the importance to further build on lessons learned from recent experience with national and local examples in terms of transition to resource-efficient economy and functioning of institutions for sustainable development.

Discussion on air quality

Ministers will continue to cooperate in the field of **air protection** and exchange of information relating to approaches of individual countries to address this issue.

Ministers will support **joint projects on cross-border cooperation** in air protection and transboundary impact field.

In order to improve the air quality the ministers consider necessary to support measures focused on reduction of the emissions from local heatings, alternative transport, lowering of the impact of significant industrial sources on the air quality, including district heating plants.

V4 countries, Bulgaria and Romania will cooperate in exchanging information and experience on dealing with domestic heating.

The problems of local heatings need to be addressed from all points of view, under the scope of positive stimulation (subsidies) and by means of efficient inspections as well. Special attention has to be paid to the question of check-ability of households, with respect to the principals of privacy protection and the right for inviolability of private property.

Experience with implementation of Natura 2000 – strengths and weaknesses

Ministers agreed that future financing of management of Natura 2000 sites is of utmost importance for achieving Natura 2000 objectives. The Ministers welcomed that support for protecting biodiversity including Natura 2000 network features among the investment priorities within the proposed MFF and expected regulation on LIFE+.

Ministers agreed to further strengthen expert level cooperation among the V4 countries in the field of Natura 2000 implementation and other nature conservation issues of mutual importance, by organising an exchange of experiences under the Hungarian V4 Presidency.

EU Accession to the Carpathian Convention

Ministers of Visegrad Group Countries and Romania as the Parties of the Carpathian Convention advocate the accession of the EU to the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Carpathian Convention).

Done in Zbiroh, on 8 November 2011.

For the Czech Republic

For the Republic of Hungary

For the Republic of Poland

For the Slovak Republic

For the Republic of Bulgaria

For Romania