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Dear Colleagues,

It is my pleasure to be here and participate in this panel discussion. Georgia made a commitment to promote green economy, as it has no other alternative for sustainable growth. The country takes responsibility to enhance its environmental legislation step by step in accordance with international agreements and EU acquis. We see the future of our country in the use of clean and renewable energy sources and environment-friendly industry development.

We recognize that to achieve green economy standards we need to develop local human as well as institutional capacity and actively cooperate with international society to share the best practices and experience built so far. Georgia is now taking active steps to modernize infrastructure, reform education as well as health system, so consideration of the green economy practices is vital at the moment. We think that greening the economy is much depended on good governance and all stakeholders play crucial role in its achievement.

Greening the economy is a cross-cutting and complex development issue requiring scientific knowledge, innovation, public understanding, political and legal commitment and efficient economic development strategies at the national, regional, and international levels. It is not easy to integrate environmental and economic policies. We are facing challenges and have several questions to be answered. How to move from the theory of using economic instruments to the practice; how to choose the appropriate tools and integrate them with existing regulatory system for effective implementation. How to support industries and at the same time ensure efficient use of energy and natural resources. In other words how we should guarantee that both economic and environmental benefits are in place.

All above require significant efforts from political leaders. In this regard I would like to underline the role of international community that is essential for the success of the process.

Therefore, it was very timely to launch the EaP GREEN programme this year which financed by the European Union and by several OECD and EU governments and institutions. This cooperation and support presents example of how the international organizations - OECD, UNECE, UNEP, and UNIDO – assist the EaP countries to move together towards green

economy “by promoting the integration of environmental considerations into the processes of economic, social and political reform”.

In the framework of this Programme UNECE supports implementation of a component related to EIA and SEA. Within this component the revision of the existing national regulatory and legislative framework on EIA and SEA is planned in Georgia in order to comply with the EU relevant legislation. The review and gap analysis will in its turn support acceleration of accession process to the Espoo Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in a Transboundary Context.

Hence, Georgia’s interest in greening its economy is expressed in many ways. Georgia, as a pilot country, with support of UNEP made preliminary Scope Study of the Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB). In the framework of TEEB assessment study, Georgia identified several strategic sectors including Agriculture, Forestry, Energy, Mining and Eco-tourism as potential drivers of sustainable development of the country. The research gave us appealing findings and prepared solid background for full length TEEB study for Georgia that is underway now. We will be glad to share its experience to our partners to cooperate in this regard.

Georgia, as a state in negotiations on the EU-Georgia Association Agreement, is developing environmental legislation according to the requirements determined by the Association Agreement. In order to achieve and maintain the appropriate quality of water resources Georgia intends to replace the existing administrative principles in water resource management and introduce the integrated river basin management approach. A new Law on Water has been drafted to introduce this approach in Georgia.

As mentioned above, the Ministry has a wide variety of challenges and in order to deal with them, effectively ensure environmental protection and rational use of natural resources we mainly focus on the following priorities:

1. Harmonization of Georgian environmental legislation with EU acquis;
2. Ensuring green development of the country;
3. Strengthening cooperation with all sectors;
4. Involvement of all relevant stakeholders in environmental issues.

We also started promoting green business practices. The Minister of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia has recently announced special competition: “Georgian Green Business Awards” for locally operating companies in 8 nominations. By the end of the year, we expect the results, based on which the ministry will create the publication of outstanding green business practices in Georgia.

In addition, I would like to mention that we welcome and support the “Astana Green Bridge Initiative”: Europe-Asia-Pacific Partnership for the implementation of “Green Growth” and hope for vivid cooperation for its further development.

Thank you very much for your attention!