

Dear Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be with you here and share a few thoughts on environmental impact assessment in transboundary context and strategic environmental assessment. However, as the upcoming Presidency of the 24th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change which will be held in Poland in 2018 I would also like to say a few words about the climate process as the two topics are interlinked.

The Paris Agreement was a historic breakthrough in the fight against climate change. For the first time it recognized that Parties could contribute to climate change protection in line with their national circumstances. Therefore, the Paris Agreement can be the first truly global agreement, with the participation of all states. In accordance with the Paris Agreement, each State declared its highest ambition in its nationally determined contribution (NDC), a periodically reviewed instrument of progressive ambitions.

Currently the negotiations within the Climate Convention aim at developing the implementing provisions of the Agreement, which will be adopted during the 24th session of the Conference of Parties to the Convention in Poland in 2018. We wish to continue the climate negotiations in the spirit of the Paris Agreement, namely to ensure the universal participation of all States, the voluntariness, choice of sequestration and emissions reduction pathways and the freedom to use national resources. We believe that solidarity and respect for all countries need to be always maintained. Developing a compromise on future transformation requires efforts to recognize the priorities of other states, listen attentively, and propose balanced solutions.

Climate change is one of the most important obstacles to achieving sustainable development, but not the only one. Abuse of the

environment, manifested by excessive emissions into air, water and soil or excessive land use, can result in a number of unfavorable phenomena that contradict the concept of sustainable development, such as the decline in biodiversity, loss of soils available for food production or scarcity of water for human needs. Only seeing the natural environment as a mutually intertwined whole can allow us to use our limited resources effectively and keep them unchanged for future generations.

Decision makers often face the need to make decisions in the light of the conflicting interests of different social groups. In such cases, the environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment procedures are extremely valuable, allowing a holistic perception of the problem and finding the optimum solution, transcending economic interests or narrowly understood environmental protection, comprising comprehensive sustainable economic, social and environmental development.

The states are confronted with the need to implement a transformational effort of the whole society towards sustainable development. In this effort we must keep the focus on human dimension – only a sustainable transition to decent jobs and welfare in times of economic and social transformation can ensure broad support to more ambitious climate policy goals. This must also go hand in hand with nature and environment protection – stopping biodiversity loss, ensuring clean and safe environment and providing food security are fundamental elements and enablers of sustainable development.

In order to achieve the 2 degrees goal, we need to tackle all emission sources and tap their potential to either limit the emissions or increase sequestration. It is important to use multiple national

policies as vehicles for NDC implementation – not only a stand-alone climate policy. It is also key to ensure appropriate incentives on the ground to make climate goals a beneficial opportunity, rather than economic hardship.

In Poland, we are working towards making the best out of our opportunities in four areas:

- Firstly, the heating – central heating systems and use of geothermal and biomass energy sources;
- Secondly, the energy demand in housing – by improving the insulation of public buildings, community houses, as well as individual houses;
- Thirdly, the energy demand in mobility – electric public transport, with higher share of subway, trams and electric buses, where Poland is one of major producers of such vehicles;
- Fourthly, the waste management system – improvement of recycling, implementing circular economy concepts, lowering demand for raw materials in order to postpone the moment of exhaustion of, for instance, metal ores or phosphates.

At the same time, we are putting in Poland much effort into **incentivizing increased emission removals by forest ecosystems and soils through national level policies and programs**. Our lesson learnt is that such policies and initiatives should be harmonized with other country policies and be aligned with broader development goals.

The transformation towards a low-emission and climate resilient economy should be seen as an opportunity, both in the context of new development opportunities and strengthening the resilience to the negative climate change effects. Poland developed a national climate change adaptation strategy and currently is working on urban

climate change adaptation plans for 44 biggest cities in Poland. All Urban adaptation plans will be developed in accordance with one methodology. The cities are particularly vulnerable to climate change risks as this where most urgent challenges are concentrated. Their high level of industrialization entails significant climate change impacts on urban development dynamics and life quality of inhabitants. The Project "Development of Urban Adaptation Plans for cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants in Poland" has been implemented since 2016 and it will end in 2018.

In addition, complementary to the above project, more than 100 Polish cities with less than 100 000 inhabitants are provided with adaptation to climate change trainings and courses to increase the awareness and knowledge of local government officers.

Previously Poland developed "Guidelines for the Urban Adaptation Plans preparation" and "Guide to investment preparation respecting climate change mitigation and adaptation as well as resilience to natural disasters". The latest document describes how to take climate change into consideration during the process of environment impact assessment.

Last but not least I would like to mention that since 2015 my Ministry has been involved in a series of training courses in the field of climate change with special focus on environmental impact assessment in developing investments and projects. The courses are organized in the frame of the European Network of Environmental Authorities and Polish Ministry of Economic Development.

Thank you for your attention.