

**Statement by Mr. Soprano, Director, Ministry for the Environment
and Territory, Italy**

Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment represent crucial instruments to de-couple economic growth from environmental pressure and to promote sustainable production patterns. They require a strengthened collaboration among countries and within sub-regions, and the building of a constructive dialogue between public authorities, the private sector and the public.

EIA and SEA have a crucial role to play in the UNECE region, where a dynamic process of economic growth and integration is under way, bringing to vast opportunities and structural changes but also to significant challenges for sustainable development. EIA and SEA are essential for sustainable development also beyond the UNECE region, and therefore we are particularly pleased to hear that countries outside the UNECE are expressing an interest in the methods and tools that the Convention and Protocol promote.

The application of the Espoo Convention in Italy has proved to be highly beneficial, since it has provided the opportunity to share with our neighbour countries EIA practice and methodologies, to transfer know-how, and to contribute, through a fruitful collaboration, to the protection of unique ecosystems, like the Alps and Mediterranean Sea.

It is for this reason that it's our intention to organise, together with Croatia and UNEP/MAP, a meeting for the whole Mediterranean sub-region. It would be an opportunity to share experiences among all

Mediterranean countries, including those not members of the UNECE, and to discuss the role of the Convention in promoting cooperation and environmental protection of common areas.

It's with a great pleasure that we note attendance from countries outside the UNECE at this meeting and we are thankful to the Croatian government for its kind hospitality.

Thank you.