



**5th EU-Central Asia Environment and Climate Change Working Group Meeting
15-16 December 2016, Brussels, Belgium**

Statement delivered by the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) on 16 December 2016

Distinguished Participants,

Recognizing Central Asia as a region of strategic importance for our membership, the REC has been committed to sustain a strong, durable and stable relationship with CAREC, as well as with the countries of Central Asia and the region as a whole. Governed by 32 countries and the European Commission, the REC pursues its mission by fostering sustainable development through promoting dialogue and cooperation among interest groups, and thereby contributing to the improvement of the environment, social cohesion, stability and well-being. The mission, mandates and strategies of the REC uniquely position the organisation as a neutral platform and catalyst for policy dialogue and the advancement of regional and national debates in areas of emerging importance on the public agenda and those that require particular expertise, as well as diplomatic engagement. The status of the REC as an independent, self-financing, non-partisan, non-advocacy and non-profit international organisation has become a model for open, transparent, efficient and accountable international cooperation in Europe and beyond.

Our focus is on helping communities to

- strengthen environmental governance
- shift to a low-carbon economy
- build resilience to climate change, manage natural resources, and
- develop capacities for future environmental stewardship.

In 2015, on the occasion of REC's 25th Anniversary, the REC signed a Memorandum of Understanding to recalibrate our institutional cooperation with CAREC for the transfer of regional knowledge and experience in order to stimulate sustainable environment initiatives for societies, especially in the areas of water management, green economy and climate change. Our partnership is instrumental in supporting Central Asian countries in strengthening their capacity to address environmental challenges, promote a sustainable framework for resource-sharing and integrate disaster risk reduction, resilience, climate adaptation and mitigation in local, national and regional policies. Our partnership is experienced in promoting the development of a vibrant and democratic environmental civil society and its deep involvement in the dialogues and programmes in an effort to encourage the society to move towards more effective policies, equitable and sustainable development and inclusive growth.

Another essential cooperation mechanism of the REC with Central Asia is the Environment and Security Initiative. ENVSEC is a unique partnership of OSCE, UNDP, UNECE, UNEP and the REC to strengthen national capacities, regional coordination mechanisms and international cooperation for environment and security risk reduction in Eastern Europe, South Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia. Through ENVSEC we are working in Central Asia with the EU's Instrument contributing to Security and Peace to enhance the understanding about the linkages between climate change and security and to strengthen capacities to anticipate, prevent and mitigate effectively and in a timely manner potential security risks resulting from climate change. A key target group of our work in Central Asia are the Aarhus Centres. For example, with the Governments of Switzerland, Austria and Finland, we are strengthening the capacities of Aarhus Centres in Central Asia in Disaster Risk Reduction to enhance awareness of local communities.

We look forward to contributing to the upcoming working group meetings, preparatory meetings and high level conference.

Thank you for your attention!