***Climate Change and Forestry in 21st Century***

***Speech given by Mr Marjan Podgoršek, State Secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of the Republic of Slovenia***

***Belgrade 14 May, 2018***

*Honourable Minister Mr Branimir Nedimović*

*Honourable Vice Administrator Mr Liu Dongsheng*

*Honourable Ministers; Honourable heads of delegations*

*Excellences*

*Dear Ladies and Gentleman*

Let me start with expressing my appreciation to our hosts for the excellent organisation of the 2nd High Level Meeting of the Coordination Mechanism for Cooperation in Forestry between China and the Central and Eastern European Countries and for recognizing the importance of the topic of Forests and Climate Change and including it to the programme of this meeting.

The issue of Climate change and importance of forests in addressing the negative impact of Climate change has been on the table of international meetings for some time now, the awareness on the regional and global level is rising.

We can agree that forests are one of the most important and efficient carbon sequestering agents and as such immensely important in the Climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. Numerous agreements and initiatives are globally, regionally and locally devoted to these issues and we are consistently reminded of the negative consequences of Climate change and the impact it has and will have on forests in the future.

Having said that we feel, that the importance of forests in Climate change still needs our attention and still has some ground to cover before it will become one of the leading topics of the global Climate change debate.

As such, the issues concerning climate change and especially the role of forests in mitigating the effects of the climate change cannot be stressed enough. In this respect it is only logical that the Coordination mechanism addresses these issues from. We believe that the joint statement we have here reflects this well enough.

In this respect we strongly support the joint statement and the messages it carries here today.

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Mr Chairman,

The Coordination Mechanism for Cooperation in Forestry between China and CEE Countries should acknowledge international agreements reached in other relevant international fora and take guidance from them, but should also play its role in the international arena within its mandate. The Coordination Mechanism has already included the goals connected with climate change adaptation and mitigation into its mission and has developed a special working group of the Scientific research and education cooperation that deals with “Forest protection and conservation in adaptation to climate change.”

I cannot help to think that this Coordination Mechanism with its particularities is ideally positioned to develop inter-disciplinary approaches in forestry when it comes to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

With having sustainability principles in mind the Coordination Mechanism can contribute to the adaptation and mitigation efforts.

It can give local guidance on the forest protection and conservation and it can serve as a bridge between different approaches to the same issues.

It can serve as best practices sharing platform in sustainable and multifunctional management of forests and it can serve as a joint projects platform in Conservation of forests.

It can develop institutions within each country and it can connect different institutions from different countries to work for the common goals.

It can pull and help to provide financial resources or it can provide solid ground for investments and economic development of communities dependent of forests.

These are but a few of the numerous possibilities that this Coordination Mechanism can bring to the table.

This alone puts the Coordination Mechanism in a privileged position in the international arena. And we believe that the Coordination Mechanism can make a difference in the international arena by providing answers coming from our science and education cooperation component;

The Coordination Mechanism can help to raise awareness on Forest management and conservation, by providing a model of cooperation in forestry for others to follow;

And the Coordination Mechanism can provide a model of economic and scientific cooperation in forestry.

In this respect we support the organisation of a special side event during the COP24, dedicated to 16+1 Forestry, [the organisation or workshops for scientists proposed by China] and all other future initiatives and events.

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*Mr Chairman,*

*Mr. Vice Administrator,*

*Ministers;*

When we agreed to establish this Coordination Mechanism in May 2016 we agreed on an ambitious vision and clear goals.

Addressing the Climate change seems as the overarching priority of these endeavours. To be able to address these challenges we need to strengthen our cooperation and increase it dynamics. In this respect we encourage and urge each member of the Coordination Mechanism for Cooperation in Forestry between China and the CEE Countries to:

* Increase their involvement in the work of the Secretariat, providing them with your vision, ideas, and concrete action proposals,
* Use and help the Secretariat in updating the 16+1 website,
* Disseminate the information regarding the activities of the Coordination Mechanism and get fully involved in the activities of the Coordination Mechanism;
* Get fully behind the agreed actions and provide their contribution to them;
* And allocate appropriate human and financial resources to meet the goals and fulfil our task.

The last two years were spent on the development of the structure of this Coordination Mechanism, creating the needed tools for our cooperation. Now is the time to increase our efforts in implementing the vision and goals of the Coordination Mechanism and its Action plan by full involvement of each member in the implementation of the operational cooperation and agreed activities of the Coordination Mechanism.

Only in doing so, can we hope to make a significant difference in forestry and climate change adaptation and mitigation and other forestry relevant issues.

Thank you!