

Declaration
of the Signatories to the Charter of the
Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC)
on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the foundation of the REC

adopted on 18 June 2010

We, the Ministers of Environment and their High Officials as well as the European Commission, in our capacity as Signatories to the Charter of the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (hereinafter Signatories), having met in Hungary on 17 and 18 June 2010 adopt the following Declaration:

We recall our joint conclusions from the Ministerial Consultation of the year 2000, and the Ministerial Declaration we adopted in 2005 noting with satisfaction the achievements of the REC that “has proven to be a viable, independent organisation providing services to governments, local authorities, NGOs and businesses”.

We highly appreciate the continuous development of the REC over the last 20 years. The REC has evolved into an international think-tank and facilitator contributing to the international environmental dialogue and actions to address European and global environmental challenges. It is a multi-stakeholder platform for policy development and capacity building at national, regional and local levels in Central and Eastern Europe and beyond. The REC has the necessary knowledge and expertise to further contribute to the protection of the environment within the European region, to support and assist the environmental dimension of the EU enlargement process, and to contribute to major European and global efforts for sustainable development.

We salute, in the light of this record, the visionary initiative of our founding members for the establishment of the REC 20 years ago as a unique and exemplary “partnership initiated by the USA, the European Commission and Hungary” and joined by 29 other governments to date.

We acknowledge the Signatories and partners of the REC for their contribution to the successful development of the REC. Special appreciation goes to the donors of the REC who have enabled the activities through their guidance and financing.

We note with satisfaction that the REC has been able to play an active role in mobilising financial resources amounting to over EUR 160 million during the last 20 years, successfully advancing its mission through the implementation of approximately 4000 projects.

We express our gratitude for the distinguished personal contributions to the achievements of the REC during the last 20 years by former and present members of the Board of Directors, the General Assembly, and the staff of the REC as well as all individuals who have supported the work of the REC.

We express our special appreciation to those Signatories – including the Host country – who bilaterally granted a privileged legal status to the REC on their territory in order to enable, and improve the efficiency of, REC operations. In addition, we refer to our call in the 2005 Ministerial Declaration for “the completion of the harmonisation of the legal status of the Country Offices to that of the Head Office to the REC” and recommend to pave the way for this harmonisation by concluding a new, optional, multilateral legal instrument for interested Signatories.

We see future REC activities as focused primarily on two priority areas: promoting governance for sustainability and facilitating transition towards a green economy, i.e. a resource-efficient, safe and sustainable low-carbon society. The specific REC approach based on multi-stakeholder dialogue and cooperation on a neutral platform should be preserved for the future. The transfer of best practices and experiences in environmental protection and promoting sustainable development from Central and Eastern Europe to other regions should continue. We also recommend a more active involvement of the REC in initiatives such as the Eastern Partnership in mutual agreement with countries concerned. The REC should remain active in contributing to and implementing the priorities agreed upon within the European and global environmental processes.

We recommend that the REC strategy for the period 2011-2015 reflect these priorities.

For a more effective implementation of its strategy, we encourage the REC to explore transparent, innovative financial mechanisms including special development funds, revolving funds, financial investments, endowments, individual and foundation donations, corporate finance and government funding. We recognise the need for untied funds to allow the REC to identify and address emerging problems.

We reiterate our invitation to governments and other donors to consider the REC as a potential vehicle for support when allocating their aid and assistance for sustainable development.

Szentendre, Hungary, 18 June 2010