

Vaduz Ministerial Statement

We, the Ministers and high-level representatives of the Governments of the countries of the Caucasus region: Republic of Armenia, Republic of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Russian Federation and Republic of Turkey, meeting in Vaduz, Liechtenstein at the invitation of the Ministry of Environmental Affairs, Land Use Planning, Agriculture and Forestry of Liechtenstein and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP):

AWARE that the Caucasus region, which is one of the unique mountainous ecosystems of Earth, rich with biological and landscape diversity and one of the ancient centres of civilization, constitutes a source of diverse ecosystems, species and genetic resources;

RECOGNISING that this statement will not affect the sovereign rights of the countries and their related international policy;

CONSIDERING the Caucasus region in terms of its geographic, environmental, economic and social potential;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the different economic, social and environmental conditions in the countries;

AIMING at improving the social and economic conditions and the quality of life of the inhabitants of the Caucasus region, as well as taking into account the strong linkages between mountain regions and the lowlands;

EMPHASISING the need for encouraging public participation in sustainable development undertaken in the Caucasus region;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT relevant multilateral environmental agreements to which our Governments are parties;

NOTING the work of the Environment and Security Initiative and the Mountain Partnership in participating countries;

RECALLING the Declaration “Building Bridges to the Future” adopted in Belgrade 12 October 2007 by Ministers of the region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE);

AIMING at the involvement of all Caucasus countries in the protection and sustainable development of the Caucasus region, drawing on the experience of UN agencies, interested countries and international organisations, as deemed appropriate by the concerned countries of the region;

Have agreed to

1. Invite the countries of the Caucasus region to strengthen partnerships, as appropriate, for the protection and sustainable development of the mountain regions of the

Caucasus, taking into account generally recognised principles and norms of international law,

2. Appreciate the work done by UNEP in mountain protection and sustainable development in the Caucasus region and encourage UNEP to continue to promote partnerships in this area,
3. Welcome the sharing of experience with the Alpine and Carpathian Conventions, inter alia, within the Mountain Partnership, as appropriate, and call upon UN agencies and organisations to continue to support the efforts to this end,
4. Appreciate the activities of the REC Caucasus, the Russian REC and the REC Turkey, as international NGOs, in support of the efforts of the Caucasus countries towards protection and sustainable development of the region and encourage them to continue their work, as deemed appropriate by the respective countries of the region,
5. Express our gratitude to the Ministry of Environmental Affairs, Land Use Planning, Agriculture and Forestry of Liechtenstein for organizing this meeting of Ministers and high level-officials on strengthening partnerships for the protection and sustainable development of the Caucasus region,
6. Welcome the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host a next meeting and request UNEP to solicit the views of the Governments of the region,

Vaduz, 16 November 2007