Address by HE prof. dr. Roko Zarnic, Minister of Environment and Spatial planning of the Republic of Slovenia, at COP16/CMP6 in Cancun, 8. 12. 2010

Mrs. President, colleagues Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Slovenia is an Alpine and Mediterranean country, which means that we are located in one of the most vulnerable regions to climate change. In the last decade we have faced severe droughts, more frequent floods and numerous landslides, so the Slovenians are very aware of the consequences and urgency of dealing with climate change. Even today, rivers are rising to dangerous levels after severe rain and snowmelt.

You may also know that 60% of Slovenia is covered with forest and almost 40% with protected areas. Our forests provide a carbon sink of about 2,5 t CO_2 equivalent per capita, of which only less than a third is accounted for towards our Kyoto target.

To achieve the Kyoto target of 8% reduction of emissions the Slovenian Government adopted in December 2006 the "Operational program for reducing the greenhouse gas emissions until 2012", which was revised in July 2009. We are also implementing the EU legislation and policies related to climate change. According to the latest analysis, Slovenia is on track to meet its Kyoto target, mostly with domestic measures and sinks.

Madame President,

Before the Copenhagen Conference in 2009 our Parliament adopted the Declaration on the Active role of Slovenia in Shaping the Future International Climate Policy, providing a broad mandate for climate policy in the country and in the international arena, accepting the guidance of IPCC on the needed emission reductions by mid century. As a member of EU, Slovenia associated itself with the Copenhagen Accord, which provides the framework for our long term planning and action even in the absence of a global comprehensive legally binding agreement.

An important step to give climate change higher priority in Slovenia was the establishment of the Government Office of Climate Change in June 2009. The main task of this coordinating body is to ensure inter-ministerial cooperation in the field of climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Just today, our Office of Climate Change has published the second draft of the Climate Act which is a result of an extensive public consultation over the last year. The draft Act includes what we agreed in Copenhagen: a long term objective to reduce the emissions to 2 tonnes per capita by 2050 and the legal basis for financial assistance to developing countries to address climate change.

We know we are not going to be a big donor, but we would like to provide assistance where we can make a difference. Our key priorities in this are:

- sustainable forest management, and

- development and transfer of low carbon technologies.

We are already working with our neighbouring countries in the Balkans and with multilateral organisations to develop a programme of cooperation in these fields.

Due to our deep relationship with forests we joined the REDD + Partnership earlier this year. Because of this we are also looking forward to coming to agreement here in Cancun on both the LULUCF and REDD+. In doing this we need to make sure, that sustainable forest management is truly rewarded under the convention and the Kyoto protocol, creating and incentive for long term preservation for this multifunctional resource in all countries of the world and accounting for what the atmosphere actually sees.

Our social, economic and environmental analysis of options for the long term Low Carbon Strategy of Slovenia points out the fact that we cannot achieve the needed emission reductions on our own, or even only as part of the EU. It can only be done if all the international community acts in a coordinated manner, in accordance with common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

And, dear colleagues, I think this is what this conference is about.

Slovenia is working towards fulfilling its share of responsibility. I know that there are still many crunch issues on the table that negotiators have been dealing with since Bali. It is our job as ministers to achieve a good result in Cancun. And I believe this result is within our grasp.

The number of people around the world who work hard in combating climate change is growing. To further motivate them, the message from Cancun must be positive.

I thank you.