

Opening Ceremony

The Opening Ceremony took place on the morning of 14 September and was attended by a number of representatives from the host country's government as well as from the neighbouring countries. Apart from the distinguished scholars and development practitioners who were participating, there was also a large number of special invitees attending the Opening Session. Journalists, representing Chinese media, were also present. The speeches delivered, and in some instances translated into English, are presented in this chapter.

SANDER G. TIDEMAN
Chairman, Council for the Sustainable Development of Central Asia (CoDoCA)

It is a great pleasure to see so many distinguished delegates from so many different countries and professional backgrounds at this conference. We are particularly pleased that so many high-level government representatives and policy-makers have taken the trouble to travel to Urumqi, in spite of obstacles such as long distances, complicated visa procedures, floods, and the financial crises in Asia and Russia.

I would particularly like to welcome:

- ▶ Madam Liu Xiuru, Director General, State Environmental Protection Agency of China
- ▶ Wang Huai Yu, Vice-chairman of the Xinjiang Government Region
- ▶ Mr. Kyshtybaev, Vice-minister of the Environment of Kyrgyzstan
- ▶ Mr. Bulat Esekin, Director, National Environmental Action Plan of Kazakhstan
- ▶ Mr. Bedyurov, National Representative of the Altai Republic of Russia
- ▶ Mr. Togtokh, Member of Parliament of Mongolia, the country in which CoDoCA was founded.

This impressive show indicates that many people in Central Asia share the vision of CoDoCA; that is, to create a platform through which all nations and peoples of this unique region can discuss their common environmental and developmental problems and to develop a suitable development model based on the special natural, ecological, and social conditions of this huge and largely unspoiled landmass. The failure to take these conditions into account can lead to enormous environmental and social damage, as was clearly shown by the Aral Sea disaster.

A suitable development model for this region is also needed, since one cannot simply expect that opening up to foreign markets and capital will automatically and by itself bring prosperity to all. In fact, opening up to today's global economy is not without its price in social and environmental terms. This has become very clear from the recent collapse of the Asian Tiger and Russian financial markets.

Since Central Asia includes much of Western China, especially the Xinjiang region and the Tibetan-Qinghai plateau, it is very significant that Urumqi is the host of this conference. We are very happy indeed that our Chinese friends have taken the initiative to host the second CoDoCA conference after the Mongolians hosted the first conference.

We hope that it will lead to more intense cooperation among the Central Asian nations which share crucial environmental assets, particularly the mountain ranges of the Tianshan, Altai, Pamir, Hindu-Kush, and Himalaya. These mountains hold the water resources that form the source of life in Central Asia and also for much of Asia and Eurasia. Most big Asian

rivers spring from Central Asia; viz., the Yellow River, the Yangtse River, the Mekong, the Sutlej, the Ganges, the Brahmaputra, and the Indus. If the natural resources in the highlands are badly treated, such as the forests, the effects on the lowlands are clear, as is evident from the recent floods in China.

CoDoCA believes that the people of Central Asia should see themselves as the custodians of these unique and special resources which are so important for the rest of the world. Significantly, the traditional inhabitants of this region were very well aware of how to deal with these fragile and often finite resources. Nomads would move their flocks with the seasons to prevent pastures from being overgrazed. Modern development planners should therefore learn from the traditional cultures how to maintain the ecological balance of the soil and wildlife.

CoDoCA started four years ago at a similar conference in Mongolia; the proceedings of which have been published as a book. Yet CoDoCA is only a small non-governmental network of people interested in the development of Central Asia. We cannot and would not want to impose any development view on any nation. It is up to each nation and nationality to determine its own future.

We can merely create a platform for debate about which kind of development brings the most benefits in the long term, namely, harmony among people and nature. It is my sincere hope that this unique conference will be a catalyst in this regard. I wish you a very fruitful conference.

Thankyou very much.

PROFESSOR SONG YUDONG
Director, Xinjiang Institute of
Ecology and Geography, Chinese
Academy of Sciences (CAS)

Honourable Mr. Chairman, Respected
friends from all parts of the world,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the charming golden season of autumn, the Second Conference on Sustainable Development of Central Asia is due to open solemnly in the beautiful city of Urumqi. On this occasion, please allow me, as falls to the honour of the organizers, to extend a warm welcome to foreign guests from afar and express our heartfelt thanks to the government leaders, heads of relevant departments, and scholars who are present here.

We feel it a great honour to have the Second Conference on Sustainable Development of Central Asia held in Xinjiang. The issues to be discussed at the conference will create an important and far-reaching influence on the sustainable development of Xinjiang's society and economy and help to realise Chinese President Jiang Zeming's call to "*Create a new northwestern region with beautiful mountains and rivers*". So, I would like to take this opportunity to express my deepest thanks to the CoDoCA.

Historically, the famous Silk Road once linked Xinjiang closely with the Central Asian countries and the rest of the world. Today, the new Euro-Asian Continental Bridge enables Xinjiang to open further to the outside world. I am sure the profound and historical friendship between Xinjiang, China, and Central Asia, as well as the rest of world, will be reinforced in the implementation of a sustainable development programme for Central Asia.

Finally, I hope the conference will achieve satisfactory results and I wish

all the delegates deputed from all over the world an enjoyable stay in Xinjiang!

Thankyou!

PROFESSOR WANG HUAI YU
Vice-Chairman of the People's
Government of Xinjiang Uygur
Autonomous Region, China

Chairman, Fellow Deputies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, the Second CoDoCA Conference on 'Strategic Considerations for Development of Central Asia' is beginning. We are honoured that the conference is being held here in Urumqi, the geographic centre of Asia. On behalf of the government of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and all nationalities in Xinjiang, I cordially welcome all the guests from government departments, international organizations, and academic institutes, as well as social workers, specialists, and scholars. I wish the conference great success and hope it can make an important contribution to the process of sustainable development in Central Asia.

Since the UN Congress on Environment and Development held in Brazil in 1992, sustainable development has become an important global concern for the survival and development of human society. Close attention is being given to promotion of sustainable development through the adoption of various actions by countries around the world. This International Conference on Sustainable Development of Central Asia sponsored by the Council for Sustainable Development of Central Asia (CoDoCA) is also a positive step in this direction.

Central Asia has made an important contribution to the long history of the development of human civilisation. The common environmental problems of the

Region have made the development of the society and the economy more difficult than in other regions around the world. The promotion of rapid and efficient development, both social and economic, with the limited environmental carrying capacity and protection of existing natural resources, requires long-term commitment to a programme of sustainable development of Central Asia. The topics of this conference are therefore highly relevant and appropriate to the realities of Central Asia and can have a significant effect on the development of society and economy in Central Asia.

China has prepared a '21st Century Agenda' (Agenda 21) which highlights its national policy and action for sustainable development. This has seen positive results since it was started some years ago. In the light of the severely deteriorated eco-environment in Northwest China, President Jiang Zeming put forward the slogan "*afforestation, greening the desert, and setting up eco-agriculture*" to improve the environment and called upon the people in Northwest China to make a long-term effort to rebuild a beautiful Northwest China. All this indicates the commitment to sustainable development in Northwest China.

As the largest province in China, the Xinjiang region is rich in land, light, heat, and mineral resources. However, because of its geographic location, Xinjiang has suffered from extensive desertification, and this has seriously restricted its socioeconomic development. Since the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Xinjiang, with the support of the Central Government, has made significant strides in constructing an oasis in the desert. The state has placed great hope on the future development of Xinjiang. The province will spare no effort to reduce development differences between Xinjiang and the inland areas in order to promote sustainable development in the region.

We are hoping to cooperate with CoDoCA to draw attention and support from the international community for our efforts. During the conference, we hope to learn about many successful experiences of sustainable development from other countries, especially from our neighbours — the countries in Central Asia. Although West European countries are very far away from Xinjiang, we appreciate their interest and the support they have given to sustainable development in Central Asia. I believe our common goal is "Only one earth for us", and if the countries and regions of Central Asia, work together the prospects for the Central Asian development are very bright.

As the host, I welcome all friends who have come to Xinjiang and hope you can go around the city. Let the world understand Xinjiang, let Xinjiang understand the world.

Finally, let us wish the conference complete success and good health to all friends.

LIU XIU-RU

***Director of the Nature and Ecological Protection Department,
China National Bureau for Environmental Protection, China***

Mr. Chairman, All the Deputies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, the Second International Conference for the Sustainable Development of Central Asia is being held in Urumqi, the beautiful heartland of Asia. On behalf of Mr. Xie Zhenhua, Director of the China State Bureau of Environmental Protection, and myself, I warmly congratulate you on the opening of the conference. It is four years now since the First International Conference for the Sustainable Development of Central Asia was held in Ulaan Baatar, Mongo-

lia. In the course of four years, a tremendous change has taken place in the political and economic systems and even in environmental protection. The Second International Conference for the Sustainable Development of Central Asia, being held at the turn of the century, will be an important conference.

Central Asia has special geographical and environmental conditions and most of the Central Asian countries are in either arid or semi-arid regions. Their unique environmental conditions necessitate a greater sensitivity to problems of sustainable water use, land degradation, and wildlife and species' protection which affect not only the local ecobalance but also the global ecosystem. The environment and sustainable development of the Central Asian region are our common concern. It is essential to bring Chinese and foreign experts and scholars together to discuss and study the environment and development in this region. We hope this conference will achieve a breakthrough and obtain positive results in this respect.

Environmental protection has been given great importance by both the Chinese Communist Party and the government. Persistent efforts from all relevant departments, and vigorous support and active participation from the society, have helped us to make a lot of progress in this field. Taking precautions against pollution, finding efficient ways to reinforce ecological protection, exploring efficient ways for rural sustainable development, and promoting new economic activities in the countryside in an integrated manner are among the important efforts made so far. The China State Bureau of Environmental Protection will strengthen environmental management in the process of development and use of natural resources, prevent damage to new ecosystems, promote national natural reserves, safeguard biodiversity, strengthen environmental management over township enterprises, and maintain

strict control over the pollution of land resources in order to create a good ecological environment for the sustainable development of the country's economy and society: these are all the ultimate goals of development in agriculture and the rural economy.

However, it should be noted that our current environmental situation is still fairly grave. The floods created by the Yangtze, Neng and the Song Hua Jiang rivers may be the results of climate change, but they are exacerbated by the ecological destruction in the whole valley. This should provide us with a good lesson. At present, the country is experiencing a radical transformation in thinking about a new process of economic growth. However, the emphasis is on sustainable development so that socio-economic development is based on the carrying capacity of the environment and rational use of natural resources. The State Bureau of Environmental Protection will adapt policies and implement them in various conditions and areas for nation-wide ecological protection. A concerted effort will be made to control industrial pollution in the eastern part of the country, while, in the western part, emphasis will be on ecological protection. In extremely fragile ecological regions, special protection areas must be set up to safeguard the fragile ecology environments. As for development in resource-concentrated areas, management and regulation will be reinforced with relevant rules governing the development and use of natural resources and preventing the destruction of the environment. In regions with a better ecosystem and natural resources, eco-model areas are to be set up in an effort to promote eco-protection.

Environmental protection is borderless and this planet is our common home. Let us join our hands to safeguard our common homestead. China has always played an important and positive role in world affairs. Towards global environ-

mental protection, our attitude is both consistent and positive. China's State Bureau of Environmental Protection is willing to undertake the efforts needed, play its part, and make a valuable contribution to advance cooperation in Central Asia and facilitate the realisation of sustainable development in the Central Asian region.

Finally, I wish the Conference every success.

MR. KYSHTYBAEV
Deputy Minister for the Environ-
ment, Kyrgyzstan

I would like to thank the organizers CoDoCA and their Chinese counterparts for such a nice opportunity to participate in this conference. Kyrgyzstan's environment, being a highland environment, is quite vulnerable to technological and anthropogenic influences. This was stressed at the Rio Declaration also. Therefore, finding a solution to the environmental problems of Kyrgyzstan is of paramount importance to the country. At the same time the environmental problems faced by Kyrgyzstan are similar to those faced by other countries. Environmental issues are not faced by a single country alone but by all or most neighbouring countries. Currently, there is inadequate financing from the state budget to tackle environmental problems. Therefore it is necessary to attract foreign or international resources to resolve environmental issues faced by the CIS countries. We can say that this is a transitional and post-transitional period in the case of environmental protection. The problem is very pressing, and it should be tackled today. I hope that the discussions and considerations in the following days will bring concrete results.

In Kyrgyzstan, we have adopted an action plan on protection of the environment and an action plan on the hygiene of the environment. We have also

adopted a concept of environmental safety. Besides these, one of the main components in our President's sustainable development and human development programme is the component on environmental protection. All these four papers form a basis to implement the policy on environmental protection. I believe that this conference should be used for the adoption of positions that later can help all of us to strengthen environmental protection in our countries, especially as there is a large number of NGOs and INGOs present here. Also, I want to emphasise that the conference of the European Ministers of Environmental Protection in Denmark, in June 1998, stressed the need to give support to newly independent states in order to resolve their environmental issues and problems. I do believe that our interactions here will yield good fruit.

MR. BULAT ESEKIN
Director, National Environment
Centre, Kazakhstan

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

I should say that environmental problems in the past ten years have increased. Kazakhstan is rich in natural resources but, at the same time, suffers from non-sustainable development. Nowadays it is a matter of common knowledge that the main problems faced by Kazakhstan are the Aral Sea disaster and the nuclear test areas.

In Kazakhstan the potable water consumption rate is the lowest on the continent. Fifty per cent of the water comes from neighbouring countries. Sixty per cent of the territory of Kazakhstan is vulnerable to desertification. Kazakhstan suffers from the highest industrial pollution rate. It has the largest polluting power stations, most coal mines, and most numerous chemical operations in the region. All these problems need immediate action. Kazakhstan today has a

long-term development strategy that pays a lot of attention to regional cooperation. To tackle its problems, five Presidents in the region have adopted concrete joint projects. The President of the region declared this year as the 'Year for the Protection of Nature'. We are now developing programmes on regional co-operation for environmental protection.

Let me wish every success to the deliberations of this conference. I believe it is high time for CoDoCA to move into more practical action, so that it can become part of the national programmes.

Thankyou.

MR. BEDHYUROV
National Representative, Altai
Republic, Russia

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to greet you here at this conference in this city of Urumqi, in Western China. "*Water will be more expensive than gold*" – my people lived for years by this slogan. This is true because, on the threshold of the third millennium, humanity is facing serious environmental problems. There are territories in Central Asia that are quite interesting for all the world's nations. I am grateful to CoDoCA for organizing such a conference so that we can meet representatives from different Central Asian countries. Some years ago, when we visited the neighbouring country of Mongolia, I proposed an idea for cultural and economic cooperation among the countries of Central Asia. At that time we did not know anything about the proposition for such a conference in Urumqi. I am very happy to learn that such a conference is taking place for the second time. China borders the Altai region, which is part of Russia. Altai is a big republic and it spreads from north to south

from the Tiger forests of Russia to the Gobi desert. From west to east it spreads from the River Yirtish to Lake Baikal. The Altai area is at the heart of Russia and the heart of Altai is the Republic of Altai. Altai alone borders the four states of Mongolia, Russia, China, and Kazakhstan. Altai is the place where four other borders also come together: they are the religious and cultural borders of Islam, Confucianism, Christianity, and Buddhism. That is the reason why the Altai people are tolerant to different languages, cultures, and religions. The Altai people value the life of anything from an ant to a plant or a human being.

We are not facing many industrial deadlocks. When I refer to geopolitical and spiritual boundaries in Altai I want to say that all these countries in the region need to know how to grow into the future. I want to tell you that even though Altai is suffering from the processes of reform, the people of Altai still possess an almost untouched nature. The same can be said for west Mongolia and west China, we are all regions of the future because we believe that our poverty is our potential and our advantage because we are happy about the fact that we are waiting for industrial development to take place. I do believe that during our discussions here we will find ways for achieving better development. That is the reason why I believe that it is vital to adopt, at this conference, the Altai Convention. We are ready to share with you our strategic wealth, and that is pure drinking water. The Republic of Altai comes second in the CIS league of drinking water resources after Lake Baikal. We still possess vast forests that are considered to be the second largest in the world after the Amazonian forests. I believe that very soon it is going to be equally important to construct water pipelines as it is currently to build gas and oil pipelines.

We are grateful to the organizers for giving us the opportunity to participate in

this conference. Because we want to pave the way for the future. It was with great pleasure that we accepted the invitation to participate. Unfortunately, the Head of our Republic could not attend the conference owing to pressing economic and social problems now being faced by the republic. However, it is under his instructions that we are attending this conference.

Let me greet all of you here on behalf of the Altai people, the Altai Government, and the Altai delegation. I would also like to greet the people of Xinjiang on behalf of the Congress of Turkish Nations, of which I am the President. I would also like to greet my colleagues and scholars as members of the three Academies in Russia. Lastly, I wish to greet you as a writer and Secretary of the Board of the Union of Writers in Russia. I hope that we will be inspired by the vast territories of mountains, steppes, and deserts. I wish everybody success in our joint work here.

MR. TOGTOKH
Member of Parliament, Mongolia,
Chief Environment Committee

I am very happy to attend this Second CoDoCA Conference that is taking place in Urumqi — the beautiful capital of Xinjiang. I very clearly remember that, just four years ago, in September 1994, we took the initiative to host the First CoDoCA Conference in Ulan Baatar. The President of Mongolia came to the opening ceremony and extended a warm welcome to all the participants. All countries of Central Asia share a common fragile environment and also their development needs. On behalf of the Mongolian delegation and as a Member of Parliament, I would like to extend our sincere greetings to the host Government, the host institution, and CoDoCA. Lastly, I wish the conference a grand success.

DR. MAHESH BANSKOTA
Deputy Director General,
ICIMOD

Kathmandu, Nepal

Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Participants,

On behalf of CoDoCA, Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography, and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), I would also like to extend a warm welcome to all of you. This conference on 'Strategic Considerations on the Development of Central Asia' being held here in Urumqi has attracted and brought together a wide range of policy-makers, experts, and practitioners. Let us hope our collective wisdom will contribute to balanced development of the people and the environment of this critical but fragile landscape of Central Asia.

ICIMOD is located in the mountainous Kingdom of Nepal. It is working for the sustainable development of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas, the vast mountain chain that separates Central Asia and South Asia. The main objective of ICIMOD is to help promote economically and environmentally sound mountain development and to improve the well-being of mountain people. The centre works as an interdisciplinary research, training, and information exchange organization. It also provides advisory services and many opportunities for regional cooperation in the region.

Rapid economic and environmental change is occurring in all parts of the globe. This is true for isolated and inaccessible areas such as the Hindu Kush-Himalayas (HKH) and Central Asia. There is a great hurry for economic development in the HKH region and Central Asia; and this is where the central questions are. How do we achieve sustainable development? What are the trade-offs we want to make and who should bear these costs? What do we

wish to keep and what do we want to relinquish ? Choices need to be made in all aspects of life.

In the past such decisions were made by the people — both in Central Asia and the Hindu Kush-Himalayas, based on very limited information — most of which came from their own experiences. Today the reservoir of information has greatly expanded. We can see from the gathering here today that mountain areas and Central Asia are also on the information highway. The Internet has already opened the old silk route. Hopefully, this vastly increased supply of information will help people make better choices that will lead to sustainable standards of living and safer environments.

I believe the purpose of this conference is to share, exchange, and interact about our experiences in what works and what are the lessons from our mistakes. Change is inevitable, no matter where we are. The challenge for all of us, whether in the mountains of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas or in other parts of Central Asia, is to manage change on a sustainable basis.

I wish you a most productive meeting. I look forward to interactions in the days ahead.

Thankyou.

MADAM FU SHUQIN
Chinese Academy of Sciences

China

Mr. Chairman, Dear Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure and honour, on behalf of the Bureau of International Cooperation, Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), to extend our congratulations on the opening of the Second Conference on Sustainable Development of Central

Asia in the City of Urumqi, as well as to extend a warm welcome to all the participants who have come to attend the Conference. I would also like to avail myself of this opportunity to thank the Council for Sustainable Development of Central Asia (CoDoCA), the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), and Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography, CAS, for their great efforts in planning and organizing the conference. I would also like to thank all others who have helped in the preparation of this conference.

As most of you are aware, Central Asia has not only been very important historically, but is also seen as a very fragile environment. Global warming and changes in the global economy are also making their impact in the area. Although the region is rich in natural resources, the fragility of the environment must be taken into consideration seriously. The people of this area are also making a great effort to improve their living conditions. In all these areas, we in China not only hope to learn from the experiences of others, but would also like to share our own experiences. We live on a small planet where all are linked together economically and ecologically. One of the basic components of sustainable development that aims at economic prosperity, environmental balance, and social harmony is to be able to cooperate and work together for our common good.

Ladies and gentlemen, this conference, organized by the CoDoCA in collaboration with ICIMOD and the Chinese Academy of Sciences, will provide a good opportunity for experts and scholars from China and abroad to exchange experiences and research achievements in the sustainable development and management of the environment in Central Asia. I also hope that the opportunity provided by the conference, to share China's knowledge on sustainable development and management of the en-

vironment with our friends from abroad, will be useful.

Finally, I wish all the participants to this conference a pleasant stay in Urumqi as well as wishing the conference great success.

Thankyou very much.

MR B. BOSNJAKOVIC
Representative of the Netherlands
Government

Mr. Chairman, distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am speaking on behalf of the Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning, and the Environment. I have been asked to do so in my present position as Regional Advisor on the Environment for the UN Economic Commission for Europe.

Sustainable development is a basic pillar of the Dutch national policy. This means the integration of environmental, economic, and social sectors and concerns. One prerequisite is the involvement of all stakeholders (governments, NGOs, enterprises, the business community, and the public).

Assisting sustainable development at the regional level is an important component of the Dutch environmental and development cooperation policy. The numerous Central Asian states present at this conference are all members either of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) or of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), or both. The Netherlands is committed to and involved in the activities of both ECE and ESCAP. The former Dutch Minister of Housing, Spatial Planning, and the Environment, Mrs Margaretha de Boer, recently made the following statement about the CoDoCA Conference.

"This conference could give a very useful contribution to a realistic vision on sustainable development and environmental management in this important region. For this reason I have decided to support the organization of this event."

The pioneering role in the field of sustainable development of the present Dutch Minister of Housing, Spatial Planning, and the Environment, Mr. Jan Pronk, makes me confident that this policy will continue.

On behalf of the Dutch authorities, I wish to thank the host organizers and authorities for their constructive cooperation in the organization of this conference. I wish all participants a fruitful and successful conference.

DR. STEPHAN HUSY
Representative of the Swiss
Government

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for the Swiss Government, in particular the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation that I am representing, to take part in the present conference.

When Mr. Tideman asked SDC one year ago to support this event, we agreed without hesitating. The problems tackled in this forum are in fact crucial.

Today, the issues of maintaining peace and security, of improving the social and economic situation, and of combatting environmental degradation that could endanger the great potential of this region are not only the concern of the Central Asian states but of the whole world.

Switzerland has joined with other international undertakings to support Central Asia. It focusses its cooperation on three objectives:

- ▶ **first**, alleviating poverty in several developing countries of the region,
- ▶ **second**, strengthening political and economic reforms in the countries of the former Soviet Union in transition, and
- ▶ **third**, humanitarian assistance in cases of conflict and natural disaster.

In addition, four countries, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tadjikistan, and Uzbekistan, belong to our voting group within the Bretton Woods' Institutions (WB and IMF). As leader of this group, Switzerland defends the members' interests in these fora.

Last but not least, Switzerland is a mountainous country and as such feels deeply connected to Central Asia. We know

very well from our own experiences the importance of the sustainable development of mountainous regions. Therefore Switzerland became one of the first promoters of the 'Sustainable Mountain Development' initiative during the Rio Conference and its follow-up.

We welcome the efforts undertaken in this conference to promote a concrete interdisciplinary approach and applaud the will to create a forum supporting local and regional initiatives. I hope, and I am confident, that the ambitious objectives of the conference can be met and that this gathering will be a milestone on the way to an intensified transboundary, regional and international cooperation.

Thankyou for your attention.

