

## FIRST MEETING OF MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT IN EFTA COUNTRIES

Geneva, 5-6 April 1990

Austria, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Liechtenstein, Switzerland

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COMMON STATEMENT OF THE MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE  
FOR THE ENVIRONMENT IN EFTA COUNTRIES

The EFTA Ministers responsible for the environment met in Geneva, Switzerland, on 5 and 6 April 1990. The First meeting was chaired by Mr Flavio Cotti, Minister of the Interior of Switzerland.

The Ministers discussed the role of the environment in the framework of EFTA-EC cooperation, preparations of the Bergen Conference on sustainable development in the ECE region, and a number of important global environmental issues. They also exchanged information on all-European cooperation in the field of environment.

The Ministers reaffirmed their aim to intensify the cooperation of the EFTA countries in the field of environment. They also stressed the need to strengthen precautionary and mitigating measures in particular to minimize the emission caused by increasing transportation, energy and industrial production for environmental protection and to improve the knowledge base on the state of the environment.

The Ministers reaffirmed, in the light of the Noordwijk Declaration adopted by the Ministers responsible for the environment of the EC Member States and EFTA countries and the EC Commissioner for the Environment on 26th October 1987, the need for a closer cooperation between EFTA and EC in the field of environment. They confirmed their interest of holding a second EFTA-EC Environmental Ministerial Meeting in Switzerland.

The Ministers acknowledged the fact that environmental policies can no longer be planned and implemented in isolation by individual countries, they emphasized the economic and ecological interdependence and the need to take the environmental factors fully into account in the negotiations towards the establishment of an European Economic Space (EES).

The Ministers noted with satisfaction that sufficient common ground now exists to start negotiations on a broad and comprehensive EES agreement encompassing strengthened co-operation in the field of environment. Such co-operation should envisage the highest possible standards for

environmental protection. The EFTA countries wish to retain the higher standards they have set in certain fields, applicable especially to domestic and imported goods alike. The general European trends should facilitate finding ways of reconciling such high standards with the free movement of goods.

The Ministers welcomed the recent decision by the EC Council to establish a new European Environmental Agency. They reaffirm their governments interests to participate in the Agency on full and equal footing and express their readiness in having exploratory talks as soon as possible. In the light of the overall concern for the environment, they also expressed their hope that a close cooperation be established with other european countries. An adequate occasion for considering further this question might be at the Bergen Conference.

The Ministers also reaffirmed the EFTA-countries interest in participating in EC environment research programmes as well as other activities in the environment field initiated by the EC.

The Ministers welcomed the increased awareness of environmental problems in central and east european countries and acknowledged the need to further strenghten the cooperation in the field of the environment. They also welcomed the support to the efforts of these countries such as those carried out by the group of the 24 or envisaged by the EBRD or by the Nordic Environment Financing Corporation. They stressed that the overall aim should be that all nations in Europe should have the best possible level of technological efficiency and environmental protection.

Ministers discussed the issues that will be raised in the Bergen Conference on sustainable development in the ECE region. They welcomed this opportunity to cooperate in setting high environmental aims and underlined the need for specific commitments and timetables.

Ministers supported a number of policy initiatives such as: the precautionary principle, the establishment of international guidelines for the application of economic instruments, the strengthening of funding mechanisms to promote global environmental management,

creating plans for increased energy efficiency and use of renewables, phasing out environmentally damaging substances as well as to initiate regular international reporting and examination of environmental policy.

The Ministers attached the highest priority to tackling global problems in particular climate change and the depletion of the ozone layer. In this context, they

- ° agreed that the improvement of the knowledge base on the science and potential impacts of climate change should proceed in parallel to the development and implementation of preventive policy measures. In this regard, industrialised countries, which presently account for approximately 80 per cent of global CO2 emissions, have a major responsibility to stabilise these emissions as a first step, and to reduce them thereafter. They therefore pledged, in response to the call of the Noordwijk Declaration on Climate Change, to make every effort to promote, at the national level, vigorous energy savings and efficiency policies in all relevant sectors and the development and use of non-fossil energy sources.
- ° expressed strong support for the strengthening of the Montreal Protocol and the establishment of a financial mechanism enabling the developing countries to adhere to the Protocol. In this context they stressed the need to encourage the development of environmentally sound technologies.
- ° pledged their support for an early completion of a convention on climate change with parallel negotiations on additional protocols and urge the international community at the Second World Climate Conference to agree on concrete principles and elements of a climate convention and protocols, in particular regarding priority items such as the stabilisation of carbon dioxide emissions, tropical forest protection and reforestation, and financial measures.
- ° reaffirmed their full commitment to the work of the IPCC and urge the IPCC and the Second World Climate Conference to respond fully to the demands of the November 89 Noordwijk Declaration on climate change, and underlined the need for adequate financial support of the organisation of the Second World Climate Conference and its preparatory meetings, and urged all countries to participate in this conference at the highest level.

The Ministers recognized the need to take concerted action against marine pollution for enhanced protection and preservation of the marine environment.

The Ministers expressed their readiness to contribute actively to the preparation of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Brazil, June 1992), and underscored the need to provide financial support for this conference.

The Ministers expressed the wish that a sufficient number of countries ratify the Basle Convention on transboundary movement of hazardous waste in order to ensure its early entry into force.