

Dear Deputy Minister, Dear colleagues, Ladies & Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be here today at the **Second Advisory Board meeting** of the Project: *“Integrating Global Environmental Issues into Bulgaria’s Regional Development Process”* or the so called Rio Conventions Project.

First of all I would like to thank the colleagues from the **MRDPW, the Steering Committee members** and the **project staff** for all the work done so far and also for organizing this event.

The project main objective is to support the integration of the **3 UN conventions, on Biodiversity, Climate Change and Combating Desertification.**

The regional development planning process has provided an ideal entry point for the Rio Conventions Project, as it seeks to integrate its activities into the early planning phase so as to ensure that global environmental concerns can be mainstreamed.

In my view this is especially important today, on the eve of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP15) in Copenhagen next month.

I see **three main results** of the Rio Convention Project, that have been achieved so far, as highly relevant. They will be discussed in detail later, so I will mention now only the basic facts.

1) First and foremost, through **the training program package** jointly developed **by Sofia University and Central European University,** the project enhanced capacities and knowledge at MRDPW, MoEnvironmentWaters, district administrations and municipalities in Bulgaria on how to integrate global environmental issues into their daily activities.

2) Secondly, the project facilitated the **inter-institutional dialogue** so that MRDPW, helped by other institutions, selected 7 strategic indicators for global environmental issues integration and officially included them in the Methodological Guidelines for the district administrations and municipalities.

3) And last but not least, the project supported the capacity building process of MRDPW towards initiating and participating in strategic partnerships with other EU regions with a focus on the same area, **i.e. global environmental issues integration.**

I would like once again **to thank the MRDPW, the Steering Committee members** and **the project staff** for the excellent work done so far and hope that all planned activities for the next (last) year of project implementation will be executed successfully and in a satisfactory manner.

I would also like to use this opportunity to inform you that the **UNDP Country Office will officially be closing at the end of December 2009** at the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and UNDP will maintain a project office presence to oversee the implementation of projects that go beyond 2009.

I would like to confirm once again UNDP commitment to the project, ensuring all of you that our organization will continue to provide the needed support and help as we have been doing since the beginning.

In this regard I am also convinced **that the new management of the MRDPW** will continue with the tradition of good partnership, supporting actively the project during the last and most crucial stage of its implementation. Thank you!