



DECLARATION



by the signatories to the Charter
of the Regional Environmental Center
for Central and Eastern Europe
on the occasion of the
organisation's 25th anniversary

June 11, 2015





Preamble

In response to the challenges of economic and political development, environmental degradation, the rapid loss of natural capital, the vulnerability of societies to natural disasters and the inefficient use of natural resources, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE);

Having in mind the need to improve energy and resource efficiency, promote a circular economy, foster education for sustainable development, strengthen participatory and local governance, create healthy, resilient and low-carbon societies, preserve biodiversity, improve law enforcement and environmental management, and champion smart cities, smart energy and transport grids and green infrastructure; and

Recalling the conclusions of the ministerial consultation in 2000 and the ministerial declarations of 2005 and 2010:

We, the ministers of environment and high-level representatives, in our capacities as signatories to the Charter of the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC), having met in Hungary on June 11, 2015, adopt the following declaration.

We congratulate the REC on its 25 years of dedicated service to the environment in CEE and beyond, and on the competence and expertise it has accumulated. The partnership initiated in 1990 by the European Commission, Hungary and the United States of America, and later joined by 29 other governments as signatories to the Charter of the REC, has made a vital contribution to the development of democracy and civil society in CEE, to EU enlargement, and to the transition towards sustainable development in the region. We express our profound appreciation to all the REC's donors. We thank all who have served on the Board of Directors and the General Assembly (GA), as well as the REC's partners, management and staff.

We acknowledge in particular the patronage of H.E. Mr. Janos Ader, President of the Republic of Hungary, over the 25th anniversary of the REC. The continuous support of the Government of Hungary has been instrumental in enabling the REC's efficient operation in line with its mission. We support the REC to continue to be part of the signatories' international agenda in the future.

Mission

We reconfirm the relevance of the REC's mission to assist partner countries in addressing environmental issues through the involvement of stakeholders.

Vision

We support the REC's vision to strengthen, by 2020, its role as a leading regional environmental organisation known for its accountability, independence, innovation, efficiency and effectiveness in facilitating responses to environmental challenges in Europe and beyond.

Added value

We acknowledge the added value of the REC having, for example, reached over 5 million students in more than 20 countries with educational tools for sustainable development; implemented local environmental action plans reaching 4.8 million people in 90 municipalities; and strengthened more than 1,000 civil society organisations through capacity building and some 5,800 grants.

We commend the implementation of ministerial mandates from relevant international and regional conferences — including the Environment for Europe process, the European



Environment and Health process, the OECD Environmental Action Programme Task Force, the Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for South East Europe, and the Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Network for Accession. We also commend the REC for supporting partner countries in the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements, in particular the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

We recognise that the regional presence of the REC is an asset for the successful implementation of its mission-driven work. We welcome the transfer of lessons learned to other regions, especially in the field of environmental governance and education for sustainable development.

We appreciate the cooperative approach of the REC and its work in partnership with relevant international organisations and stakeholders.

Renewing the mandate

We recognise the expertise that the REC is able to deliver as a regional mechanism to promote the implementation of relevant EU policies in CEE and South Eastern Europe (SEE), for example via Europe's strategies towards 2020 and beyond in the fields of environment and climate change, energy and circular economy.

We support the mandate of the REC as coordinator of the environment dimension under the SEE 2020 strategy, enabling future programme development and implementation.

We encourage the continuous involvement of the REC in the Eastern Partnership countries with the aim of supporting democratic, inclusive and sustainable societies and cross-border cooperation.

We acknowledge the REC's expertise as a regional platform for promoting and facilitating the implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, once it has been adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.

Ownership

We recognise that the future tasks of the REC in the continuously changing and challenging international context require the strengthening of our ownership towards the REC and a coordinated approach on the part of the donor community in its development policies through the REC.

We call for the strengthened role of the GA and for enhanced communication in order to enable the efficient programming of the REC's activities and address the needs of partner countries.

We endorse the REC Strategy for 2016–2020 and its focus on strengthening environmental governance, combating climate change and improving natural resources management in partner countries, and we are committed to promoting the implementation of the strategy through specific contributions, projects and initiatives.

We are determined to assist the REC to mobilise the necessary resources with mechanisms such as innovative financing, bilateral grants, competitive calls and processes and voluntary contributions to implement assigned mandates and achieve envisaged results.

Concluding remarks

We express our strong wish for the successful completion of the REC's assigned mandates and the achievement of the envisaged results, and we look forward to reconvening in 2020.