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Advancing together on Biodiversity Resource Mobilization
and preparing the CBD COP PyeongChang
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Introductory speech by Mr. Renato Grimaldi
Director General of the Ministry of the Environment, Land and Sea
Directorate General for Nature and Sea Protection

Dear colleagues,

it is a great honor and pleasure for me to welcome you in Rome also on behalf of my Minister Gian Luca Galletti.

I would like also to thank the colleagues of our Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their hospitality and collaboration in the organization of this Expert meeting.

For its term of Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Italy has prepared a program focused on some main elements: the efficiency of use of resources, “green jobs”, climate policies after 2020, the greening of the European Semester.

These three themes are deeply connected and have a common ground, that is the need of inclusive and sustainable growth capable to create more opportunities for everybody, to reduce inequalities and encourage social development.

In this framework of crisis for our economies, we cannot forget development patterns based on integrated and sustainable management of natural resources, which generate multiple positive effects: economic, social and human development while preserving ecosystems. It is then necessary to approach this new economic paradigm and facilitate the transition towards a greener economy which recognizes the peculiarities and values of our territories, stressing the role the conservation of natural resources can play in the process of improving well-being and quality of life and in the creation of new employment opportunities.

Three years after the start of the “European semester” – the cycle of coordinated fiscal and economic policies – integration of environmental priorities in this process remains

a great challenge still to face that could boost growth and employment opportunities, and contribute to the promotion of a green economy as eco-sustainable, low-carbon and resource efficient.

The Italian Presidency, therefore, will strive to make the European Semester greener. Based on the new seventh Environmental Action Programme, our Presidency will aim to effectively promote a stable transition of the European Union towards a green, sustainable and inclusive economy.

As stated by our Minister Galletti, Italy's priorities are economic growth and employment, which means green growth generating new durable employment. These topics are going to be discussed during the Informal Council of Ministers of the Environment, which is taking place on next 16th of July in Milan, and the Informal Joint Council with Ministers of Employment and social policy on the 17th. These meetings have been organized with the purpose of stressing the contribution of environmental policies to economic growth and employment.

The promotion of eco-innovation, private and public investments in technologies for the efficient use of resources will allow the creation of new "green" jobs, which should be founded on the recognition of the value of ecosystems and their services provided, as well as on the preservation of natural resources.

Moreover, the conservation of biodiversity is fundamental to maintain traditional and quality productions. Therefore, the Presidency, linked to the theme of Expo 2015 in Milan, will take on the "Communication on sustainable use of food" with a particular focus on social, economic, environmental and health-related aspects, both at global and local level, giving relevance to food production systems that are sustainable and respectful of ecosystems and natural cycles.

All these topics are going to be reflected in the responsibilities that European Union and its Member States will face on the international field as well.

Our term of Presidency falls in a crucial moment regarding global processes on preservation and conservation of biodiversity and related ecosystem services.

These topics would necessarily be developed hand in hand with the process of preparation of the Post-2015 Agenda, taking into account the work on indicators done by the Statistical Commission of the United Nations. In particular, we should take into account the attempts to identify a new index other than the GDP, which can be more representative of environmental aspects of growth, giving a more precise indication of economic, environmental and social performance of a country.

We are then strongly convinced that development and growth cannot be other than sustainable, and this will require an effective action of protection of the natural capital that cannot happen independently from a previous recognition of its value, also in economic terms. The valorization and evaluation of natural capital, at all levels, is a particularly important theme for Italy and for my Ministry, which is supporting projects aimed to its evaluation (one for all, it is starting the national implementation of the EU initiative on MAES – Monitoring and Assessment of Ecosystem Services).

Our interest is reflected in the context of the Convention of Biological Diversity as well, paying a special attention to the topic of Resource Mobilization Strategy.

We believe the full implementation of this strategy will contribute to stop biodiversity loss, to enhance its plurality of values and to favor the integration of biodiversity in development policies at all levels. Therefore, we are glad that among the first initial actions on our Presidency there is the organization of this Expert meeting whose topics and objectives fit perfectly in the context of our program as Presidency and of our long-term priorities as Ministry of the Environment.

I invite you to be realistic and pragmatic, but ambitious as well: biodiversity suffers from different threats at global, European and National level. We have inherited from our predecessors an extraordinary natural capital but we are gradually depleting it due to patterns of growth and development that don't look at long-term sustainability. Without biodiversity, conservation, nature enrichment, ecosystems protection and development, the economic system is in an extreme danger, together with political and social cooperation that distinguishes our common Europe.

Global conventions must be an opportunity for our countries and for the international community to give national policies greater strength and effectiveness.

I hope you will work in a collaborative and fruitful way and I will reflect carefully on the outcomes of your work.

7th July 2014