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This speech was presented by Mr. Hans Beck, EEC-representative in Budapest

Mr. Chairman, Ministers, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour and a pleasure for me to conclude the list of distinguished speakers and welcome you to this conference. You might imagine that the last weeks have not been easy and smooth for EEC institutions and for their political agents.

Therefore, we from the EEC Commission are all glad on the outcome of France's referendum which hopefully will bring the EEC closer to European union and allow us to set up systems on this European continent which are adapted to the political, economic and social constraints of the 21st century. The European economic community has successfully started, some 35 years ago, to replace national egotism by constructive, progressive cooperation and integration. This undertaking has never limited itself to free trade and economic joint venture. From its beginnings, it rather tried to go beyond nationalism and create a community of states, regions and citizens. The success which the EEC had, made other states apply for membership doubling the number of member states. Among the new members were not only prosperous countries; as regards some of them the EEC was told that they would soon become communist and should therefore better be kept outside than integrated. As you know, the EEC did not follow that advice. Today all signals indicate that their integration is on a good way.

Since the EEC is more than a free trade area it does not satisfy itself with the promotion of economic objectives. One of the areas, where the EEC has been active and which do not concern free trade, has been the environment, where policy was developed during the last 20 years. The EEC and all its member states reached the conclusion that environmental measures were necessary at community level in order to protect, preserve and improve the quality of the environment, and while in the beginning of the EEC environmental policy implementation and enforcement were left almost entirely to member states, it soon turned and that compliance with community environmental standards required EEC monitoring.

This explains why the EEC Commission decided to actively support this present conference. We firmly believe that environmental rules need adequate enforcement. We firmly believe that an economic community which is on its way towards a more political union needs environmental standards to make economic growth sustainable. We firmly believe that where the EEC enters into economic relation with other states, care must be taken that economic activities do not destroy or adversely affect the environment in these states.

A French poet, La Fontaine, told us some time ago that a hungry stomach has no ears. If we look around, we often find that individuals, economic agents or even governments sometimes believe that economic development should rank first and that one should forget about environmental standards and their enforcement. Until a decent economic development has been reached, the EEC commission is not of this opinion. It has just suggested a fifth environmental action programme which makes the integration of environmental requirements

into other policies a top priority for the years to come. The commission, indeed, is of the opinion that sustainable economic growth may only be reached by such an integration of environmental requirements into economic considerations. And the difficult state of the environment in parts of central and eastern Europe is less due to the fact that there were no environmental rules and standards, but rather to insufficient integration into economic requirements and to insufficient enforcement.

I hope that this conference promotes mutual understanding, leads to better enforcement of environmental rules and thus to a better state of the environment. Good luck to all participants.