



Statement delivered by Ms. Marta Szigeti Bonifert, Executive Director of the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC), on the occasion of COP21, Paris, December 11, 2015

Co-chair(s), Ministers, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin by thanking the Government of France and the City of Paris for hosting this crucial conference in these challenging times.

The success of climate mitigation and adaptation is no longer a question of technology, nor is it a question of money. Success depends on political will, on time, and on the mind-set of each one of us. Transformative change is essential at every level of governance and in every branch of the economy. With 2030 on the horizon, the transformation will have to be rapid. There is no time to lose.

We need to speed up our reaction by several orders of magnitude. We need a catalyst to make things happen faster and more smoothly.

Since it was founded 25 years ago, the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) has acted as a catalyst, like vitamin C, accelerating sustainable solutions in partnership with governments and non-governmental stakeholders. We are helping communities to strengthen environmental governance, shift to a low-carbon economy, build resilience to climate change, manage natural resources, and develop capacities for future environmental stewardship and the successful implementation of the 2030 agenda.

With long experience of supporting the region's transition to environmental democracy and sustainability, the REC is a flexible mechanism for cooperation, delivering results, empowerment and change through its office and expert networks and with the generous support of donors including the governments of Austria, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United States, as well as the European Commission.

The REC works in all areas of climate policy and clean energy, providing services and tools and cooperating with stakeholders. We are especially active in the climate–energy–food–water nexus, in line with the Environment and Security Initiative.

An ambitious outcome, with challenging goals, is needed now more than ever in Paris. Following this COP, the REC, as regional focal point for Article 6, aims to become one of the catalysts for the low-carbon revolution and the promotion of resilient communities. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe have particularly valuable lessons to share, based on their recent transition.

The REC is convinced of the added value of establishing a trust fund to promote knowledge, exchange best practices, build capacities and raise awareness of climate change. From our European region, this has the potential to catalyse change throughout the world.

I am pleading with governments everywhere, at all levels: Look round and identify the catalysts in your countries and regions! Talk to them, engage with them, trust them, use them! Enable, encourage and support them! Put your catalysts to work!

Thank you for your attention, and thank you Paris!