Speech by H.E. Joanna Wronecka, Ambassador, Head of the European Union Delegation to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan at the “International Conference on Sustainable Development in the Jordan Valley” organized by EcoPeace Middle East.

Regional event for sharing experiences, best practices, strategies and ways forward

Monday, November 10th, 2014

Dead Sea, Jordan

Distinguished Excellences, Dear Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here with all of you in this international conference.

This event is special for what is at stake, the sustainable development in the Jordan Valley.

The Jordan Valley is not an ordinary valley. Its exceptional historical, cultural and religious heritage attracts a large number of visitors every year. I am sure that you share with me the admiration and pleasure I experience every time I visit this region. Its landscape, its history and the local communities that have been preserving their traditions and activities make of this valley a unique place.

As you all know, Jordan is the second most water scarce country in the world. In addition, important surface water sources as the Jordan River and the Yarmouk River are also shared with Israel and Palestine and with Syria and Israel respectively. This implies that regional cooperation is essential to ensure their proper management and a peaceful relationship between communities since it is a basic resource for living and an input for economic activity.

Unfortunately, external pressures are negatively affecting the environmental and economic sustainability of the Valley. The level of the River has been suffering from severe deterioration in quantity and quality. Moreover, this deterioration has also an effect on the level of the Dead Sea since the Lower Jordan River is its primary source of water. Consequently, the daily life and the economic activity in the region are under threat.

Sustainable development is a basic principle and objective that the European Union has at the core of its policies. The European Union has always been sensitive to the problem the Jordan River and the Jordan Valley has been experiencing for the past decades. This is why the European Union funds a project aiming to design a Master Plan for the Lower Jordan River in the framework of the Programme SWIM.

Moreover, the European Parliament passed a Resolution in 2009 supporting the regional effort to rehabilitate the Lower Jordan River.

A lot of work has been done since the start of the project to identify economically feasible interventions that could contribute to sustainable development. Now is the moment to reap the fruit of the work
done and to establish a roadmap for implementing those initiatives that would contribute better to reverse the negative trends.

It goes without saying that actions cannot be taken in an isolated manner. The political will must come from all parties involved. Otherwise, actions will not achieve their full potential. What we do now will be examined by future generations. We have the responsibility to provide them with real opportunities and not only with a declaration of intentions.

Let’s keep in mind that the success of any initiative taken to enhance sustainable development in this area will also contribute to building peace in the region. In the history of the European Union integration we have learnt that it is by small steps that cooperation, trust, peace and progress can be built.

I wish this conference to be very successful. It is our responsibility and this beautiful valley and its people deserve it.

Thank you very much.