Dear Guests, good morning. It is my pleasure to be with you today to present the NGO regional masterplan for the development of the Jordan River Valley. A few months ago, in November of last year, we met in a conference for sustainable development in the Jordan valley. It was an important event, not only because of the importance of sustainable development within the Jordan River valley, but because of the presence of important people.

We need to protect our heritage for the benefit of all of us. As you know we witnessed sadly how the cultural and natural heritage is suffering from irresponsible human action. However, in some cases, the threat comes rather from the inaction. The Jordan Valley makes up part of our heritage and we are obliged to do our best for the future of the generations. This does not mean that we will not feel the benefits of protecting this beautiful and environmentally rich area; the site, having a rich ecosystem where fauna and flora can live and flourish. Activities such as agriculture and tourism can directly and indirectly benefit from the well-kept river and valley. Moreover communities around will have access to water, for human water consumption and other daily activities.

Regional cooperation is essential to ensure proper management of shared resources and a peaceful relationship between communities. Water is the key element for the cohesion. Therefore water resources and the responsibility for the protection need to be fairly shared between communities. The European Union supports sustainable development. As I mentioned last time, 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 of the Jordan Valley and the Jordan River.

That is why the European Union is funding the design of the regional master plan. This support has been provided in the framework of the programme SWIM, and concludes with the launch of the plan. The Regional Master Plan is a reality. Now it’s time to work together. Much work has been done during the past 3 years to identify feasible interventions, and the design of a roadmap for the implementation. The preparation of the Regional NGO Master Plan is now a reality. But this is not the end; this is just a beginning. Work is to be done to implement the actions, locally and regionally, and to support the initiatives that can bring prosperity and sustainability to the Valley. We should look at the common interest... It is step by step that cooperation and partnership becomes strong. We know this very well at the European Union, since this is how our project started.

Action is needed both and to bring sustainability to the Valley. Now we need to move on to work to achieve the reality. Small initiatives set the foundations for peaceful cooperation and understanding, allowing us to go much further. Sustainability should be our focus, not short round benefits. There is only one way towards prosperity and peace – to work together with energy, enthusiasm, trust, conviction and courage.

Partnerships can become stronger. I wish that all the participants come up with good ideas – I wish you success.