

## **Day-Chair's Conference Opening Statement**

**Gerard Wolters, Inspector-General for International Enforcement Cooperation, Netherlands Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM)**

### ***Welcome***

Dear Minister, distinguished guests, honored speakers and panelists, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends!

On behalf of my co-chairs, Deputy Assistant Administrator of the United States Environmental Protection Agency - Ms. Catherine McCabe - and Justice of the High Court of Brazil - Antonio Benjamin - and all the members of the Executive Planning Committee of the International Network for Environmental Compliance and Enforcement - it is my privilege to welcome you to...

### **THE 8<sup>TH</sup> INECE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE & ENFORCEMENT.**

It is important that we have this conference.

It is important that so many enforcement professionals from different countries participate.

It is important that we have eminent speakers in panels and workshops, and that we have inspiring discussions and conversations.

The most important, however, is that this conference leads to concrete new activities and actions. Concrete new activities that help us all to

improve our day-to-day compliance and enforcement work – in our countries, in our region and on a global scale.

Therefore the overarching theme of this conference is:

***Linking Concepts to Action: Successful Strategies for Environmental Compliance and Enforcement***

***Thanks to Our Hosts***

As we open this wonderful conference, I would like to express our deep gratitude to the government of South Africa for hosting this conference. South Africa is widely recognized not only as a wonderful tourist and conference destination, but also as a warm and inviting country with a commitment to the protection of the environment.

We are specially grateful for the support of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism and to the municipality of Cape Town in many organizational and logistical issues.

***A Renewed Sense of Urgency***

We come to this conference with a renewed sense of urgency in our work. It is now evident that how humans interact with the environment will be one of the critical issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Most indicators of global environmental quality continue to decline, and new threats have emerged. Today's world faces increased vulnerability to climate change, increased pollution, and the loss of natural resources. These hazards threaten to undermine the many advances by human society in recent decades and the rich values that have been present for many centuries.

Poor environmental management and criminal actors continue to cause a loss of biodiversity, reduction in natural capital, and the worldwide proliferation of waste. Air and water pollution persist to cause significant health risks, particularly to many people in the developing world today.<sup>1</sup> Corruption, poverty and mass migration to the cities make these problems even more complex ones. Global warming, unless we take effective action, could cause irreversible and possibly catastrophic environmental consequences as well as international instabilities and conflicts<sup>2</sup>.

Helping to drive many of these trends is the big demand of materials and energy in many developed countries and growing economies. This adds to the depletion of natural resources and the international spreading of pollution. The environmental impact of these phenomena are sometimes not well understood by consumers because they occur far from their community. On the other hand, people elsewhere do experience the negative consequences of a deteriorating environmental quality and personal health.

### ***About INECE***

Given these disturbing trends, what can this conference achieve?

How can we work to address these problems, which in many ways seem so hard to solve? Part of the answer is found in the core mission of INECE.

Eighteen years ago, approximately 20 countries attended the first international conference on environmental compliance and enforcement in

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<sup>1</sup> The United Nations Global Environmental Outlook (GEO<sub>4</sub>)

<sup>2</sup> IPCC

Utrecht, The Netherlands. Since that beginning, INECE's efforts have grown in size, stature and importance.

INECE is now a global network of more than 4,000 compliance and enforcement professionals from over 150 countries who are working in governmental organizations, the judiciary, international institutions, NGO's and academia.

What unites the INECE community is our shared commitment to the rule of law and sustainable development. Our goals are to:

- (1) raise awareness of the importance of compliance and enforcement;
- (2) develop networks for enforcement cooperation; and,
- (3) strengthen capacity to implement and enforce environmental requirements.

Weak compliance with and enforcement of environmental laws undermines the rule of law and sustainable development. These failures highlight the need for societies to continually improve the management of their environment, including strong efforts to assure compliance with environmental laws.

INECE is about global networking. But global networking is only possible in the presence of regional and domestic networks. Therefore INECE advocates and stimulates the development of environmental compliance and enforcement networks at different levels. Networks are instruments to join and multiply forces.

### ***The Rule of Law and Sustainable Development***

Compliance and enforcement are essential elements of the rule of law and good governance.

As the number of environmental institutions, laws and regulations has increased, continuing environmental problems are often symptomatic of problems involving governance and compliance with existing regulation. This is not only true with domestic laws, but also with our multilateral environmental agreements, which are growing in number and importance.

Compliance and enforcement are both individual and collective responsibilities. This refers to the domestic levels, but (more and more) to the international level. The only effective way forward is multiplying our forces through cooperation and joined action. Together with our professional colleague-enforcers, with the judiciary, with the responsible players of industry and with citizens. Building on international expertise and experience, exchanging good practices and sharing intelligence, and disseminating know-how through training and education are all instruments to make progress and improve together. Ultimately, this all has to result in concrete and visible compliance and enforcement projects.

Compliance and enforcement are, regrettably, too often the weakest elements in the regulatory chain. We need dedication and leadership to improve on this and make law work. This conference serves to motivate and inspire us all to raise the profile of compliance and enforcement for the sake of a healthy and safe environment and a future for coming generations.

### ***The Importance of this Conference***

We have here a rich base of information and a talented group of attendees on which to draw for our discussions and actions. Nearly 200 experts, coming from more than 60 countries and 100 organisations, with a broad and diverse professional and cultural background, have come to this conference. This offers us all a unique international opportunity to benefit from.

During this week, we will be fortunate to hear from some of the leading thinkers, policy makers and practitioners on important environmental enforcement and compliance issues and experiences, and to see for ourselves some of the important work that is occurring in and around Cape Town.

The success of this conference will be judged by our ability to crystallize our work around meaningful, timely and practical action-oriented outcomes and initiatives. It is through the conference workshops that we will act together to develop such outcomes and initiatives in the areas of:

- strategic management of environmental compliance and enforcement programs;
- detecting noncompliance;
- transboundary compliance and enforcement;
- biodiversity, ecosystems and enforcement;
- climate change and compliance;
- creating a culture of compliance.

The concrete outcomes and recommendations will be part of the conference proceedings and serve as an important collective roadmap for action to address and solve environmental compliance and enforcement issues, now and in the future.

### ***Closing***

I would like to thank the Secretariat for their tremendous work in organizing and preparing this conference. Also I want to express thanks all our colleagues - here in South Africa and elsewhere - who took time out of their busy schedules to put to paper their experiences and lessons for our conference proceedings and those who have otherwise volunteered to help make this conference possible through panel and workshop sessions. Of course, we are grateful to the sponsors and partner organizations that made this event possible.

Environmental degradation is a global problem. We have all come to this conference with a firm belief that compliance and enforcement, good governance and the rule of law are the foundation for sustainable development. For this sake, let all of us be committed to learn from each other and to come to action.

In this light, I want to again express our deep appreciation on behalf of all of us to our host country and the city of Cape Town for their gracious hospitality, and for providing such an exciting location for this conference.

South Africa is a country that is well known for its environmental richness and the protection of these values. As the Minister van Schalkwyk has just indicated in his speech, the ambitions and concrete activities with respect to compliance and enforcement are having results. This has been an

important consideration for INECE to chose South Africa, and in particular the beautiful city of Cape Town, as the venue our 8<sup>th</sup> international conference. We anticipate that this occasion could be instrumental to serve as a starting point for leadership and activities that result in the further development of regional environmental compliance and enforcement network initiatives. May the successful launching of the NECEMA-network in the North African Maghreb-region in the afterglow of the previous INECE conference serve as an inspiring example for similar developments in this region. The very successful regional INECE conference that took place last Saturday, and its follow-up, will hopefully serve as an important first move for progress in that direction.

I trust we will have an inspiring conference that stimulates us all to a lot of action – not only these days, but sustained action for the future.

Thank you all!