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Skopje, 8 May 2012

**Closing Seminar of the IPA 2008 Project  
“Development and Implementation of Agri-environment  
Measures”**

**Skopje  
8<sup>th</sup> May 2012**

Speaking points  
Ambassador Aivo Orav  
Head of the EU Delegation

**Dear Minister Dimovski,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a pleasure to be present today to mark the closing of a major EU funded project in support of the agricultural sector, “Development and Implementation of Agri-environment Measures”.

It is especially appropriate that this event is being held this week – Europe Week, with Europe Day itself being celebrated tomorrow. This is because the Agri-Environment Measures are very much a European Union initiative. They aim to improve the agricultural environment for farmers and rural people right across the European continent; from Malta, and even beyond Estonia to Finland.

Agriculture is very important to the economy of this country and the farm produce is excellent – you have only to go to the Green Market a couple of blocks from this conference hall, to see that. That is why improving the agricultural environment is vital for this country as it moves along the path to a European future – a path which takes it through fields, vineyards, hills and forests, all are part of the environment.

The EU is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders. This project,

whose details you have discussed during the seminar this morning, is a prime example of how the EU has helped to strengthen the Ministry's capabilities to meet the EU acquis in the area of agri-environment.

The project has played an important role in providing technical assistance to the Ministry of Agriculture. In the framework of the project the following activities have been implemented:

- trainings were provided;
- open meetings for farmers and opinion formers across the country were organised; as well as
- Awareness has been raised through information given to the public.

The project has also done a huge amount of work in reviewing and updating the regulatory background and developing related policy. This has often involved going through extremely complex legislation in minute detail – literally line by line.

As a result of the activities of this project, the infrastructure is now in place for the Ministry to start the introduction of Agri Environment Measures – initially at a pilot phase.

I commend the concept of taking care of the agricultural environment not just in this country, but in all countries in Europe. I know you have been interested to hear, in the previous technical seminar, of the lessons learned in the new EU member states and the outlook for 2014 onwards.

Looking to the future, there will certainly be further EU financial support to the agricultural sector. We are currently in the process of preparing two Twinning projects as well as a technical assistance project.

I mentioned at the start of my remarks that tomorrow is Europe Day and I will soon have to leave you to assist with preparations. Meanwhile I am pleased to have been able to get a taste of what has clearly been a successful and stimulating conference.

In conclusion I would like to thank all of the project partners for their hard work over the last eighteen months; the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy and the Agricultural Paying Agency-AFSARD; and of course also the Contractors, led by ADT from Germany, with the support of its partners.

Dear Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for your attention.