OPENING REMARKS
by H.E. Ion IONESCU, President of Romania

Your Royal Highness,
Your Excellencies,
Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to introduce to you the Co-Chair of this Summit Conference:


We are proud and happy to welcome to Bucharest the Heads of State and High Representatives, Ministers, Ambassadors and expert delegations from the countries of the Carpathian region and the Danube basin. The delegations of the participating states are headed by:

• His Excellency Rexhep Meidani, President of the Republic of Albania;
• His Excellency Petar Stoianov, President of the Republic of Bulgaria;

• His Excellency Zivko Radisic, President-in-Office of the Collective Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina;

• His Excellency Stipe Mesic, President of the Republic of Croatia;

• His Excellency Boris Trajkovski, President of the Republic of Macedonia;

• His Excellency Vladimir Voronin, President of the Republic of Moldova;

• His Excellency Rudolf Schuster, President of the Slovak Republic;

• His Excellency Leonid Kuchma, President of Ukraine;

• His Excellency Zoran Zizic, Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia;

• His Excellency Bela Turi-Kovacs, Minister of Environment protection representing the President of Hungary;

• His Excellency Jaromir Plisek, Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Bucharest representing the President of the Czech Republic;

• Mrs Jolanda Szymanek-Deresz, Secretary of State, Chancellery of the President, representing the President of Poland;

• Mr Heintz Schreiber, Director General, Federal Ministry of Environment, representing the President of Austria;

• Jurgen Keinhorst, Director, Ministry of Environment of Germany, as observer.

Our greetings also go to the senior executives of international organisations, both intergovernmental and non-governmental, who have found it possible to attend this Conference and to contribute to its deliberations.
Mrs Danuta Hubner, Executive Secretary, UN Economic Commission for Europe;

Mr Bodo Hombach, Special Co-ordinator for the Stability Pact for South East Europe;

Mr Seiichi Kondo, Deputy General Secretary of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development;

Valeryi Chechelashvili, Secretary General of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation Organisation,

as well as senior officials from the UN Environment Programme, United Nations Development Programme; United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation; European Commission; European Parliament; Council of Europe; Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe; The Danube Commission; World Bank; European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; European Investment Bank.

Only a few minutes ago, His Royal Highness and myself opened the Business and NGOs Forum, which is an integral part of this Conference. The importance of that event can hardly be overestimated. The emerging co-operation and possible alliance between business interests and civil society can go a long way towards fostering a truly regional approach to the burning questions of environment protection and sustainable development.

The Ministerial Meeting yesterday produced a valuable set of ideas and sketched out promising opportunities for comprehensive action based on the valuable work that had been done at expert level in the past few months. We shall hear more about that later in the day. The Ministers also finalised the draft Declaration that we agreed to adopt just before lunch in order to enable our media friends to meet their deadlines. I think it is appropriate to extend our thanks to the experts from all countries here present for their efficient and competent efforts to produce a solid and well structured document.
My appreciation goes in particular to the World Wide Fund for Nature and its President Emeritus, His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, for the constant support, encouragement and meaningful hands-on contribution towards developing the conceptual frame and tackling the organisational minutiae of this Conference.

A word of thanks is also due to our generous sponsors and to the large number of people – officials, workers, interpreters, catering staff – who, in their various capacities, have been involved in the preparation and smooth running of the Conference.

I shall have more to say, when my turn comes, about the substance of our expectations and hopes for this Conference and its practical follow-up in terms of tangible benefits for the men and women of our countries, for our region as a whole as part of wider Europe. At this point I would only mention that our ambition should be to bring together political will, business savoir-faire and civic responsibility, to match projects, financial resources and know-how in a winning combination.

And now, on behalf of all the participants in this Regional Summit, I shall kindly ask the Conference Co-Chair, His Royal Highness Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, to give us His opening address.