

Welcome by the Czech Minister of Environment

The IAIA SEA Prague 2005 Conference is the first global meeting of experts, decision-makers and representatives of civil society on strategic environmental assessment. Experience from the integration of environmental concerns into plans, programs, and policies demonstrates that SEA is a particularly needed and useful tool for sustainable development policy. It is our great honor that Prague has been selected as a venue for a debate that will take stock of the SEA experience and look into future development of this instrument.

The Czech Republic has fully recognized the value of SEA and so far applied this tool to more than fifty plans, programs and policies at the national and regional levels. Thanks to the global promotion of SEA by IAIA, we have been able to regularly compare our experience with the SEA practices in other countries of the world. We hope that our experience also contributes to the global debate about the possible shapes and forms of SEA in different decision-making systems.

Just now in this region, SEA is a particularly important instrument. The countries of central and eastern Europe are passing through a deep economic transition and developing forms of civil democracy that reflect their specific systems of governance. The role of SEA in reforms in decision-making frameworks will undoubtedly be considered within this IAIA Conference. We hope to gain further valuable inspiration for the enhancement of rapidly-evolving SEA systems and their application as tool for sustainable development.

I sincerely invite you to Prague, a city that has always been a crossroads of cultures and views, the city offering a thought-provoking and creative environment that fosters mutual understanding, enrichment and search for common values. I look forward to welcoming you in September with a hope that this conference will represent a new impetus for further improvement of SEA not only in our European context but in other regions of the world as well.



Libor Ambrozek

Minister of the Environment of the Czech Republic