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Welcome address by Taja Ferjancic Lakota, Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention, at the Workshop "Building and renovating in a sustainable way: from strategy to realization" in Idrija (SL), 17th October 2014

Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguished guests, mayors,

Thank you for the opportunity to be here with you today and to present the view of the Alpine Convention on the issues of sustainable building. Thought I am actually coming back to my home town today, I was asked to give this speech in English, so please excuse me for not speaking my mother thong. Allow me to first give you the greetings of the Secretary General, Mr Markus Reiterer who unfortunately was not able to be here today, but he sends his best.

The Alpine Convention is both, an instrument of protection and an instrument of sustainable development of the Alpine Arch. Although protection of the Alpine environment is easier to interpret; sustainability is a very wide topic that includes everything from sustainable tourism, development, green economy and of course sustainable building. In the last years several initiatives were developed to promote the concept of sustainable building and renovations in the Alps, amongst which the Constructive Alps award supported by Switzerland and Liechtenstein.

We can find legal background for sustainable building in the framework convention as well as in many of the protocols, but furthermore we are preparing practical information and guidelines for local and regional stakeholders in order to bring this topic closer to the people and trying to make it a reality.

In the scope of the Alpine Convention there is a special Working Group in place that deal with energy and energy efficiency and they focused on the good practices in building and renovations highlighting good practice examples from around the Alps. Projects like the energy autonomous region of Vorarlberg and the white certificates in South Tyrol translate the spirit of the Energy Platform to concrete actions. The main priority topic of the Working Group is on energy

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saving especially in heating and better isolation options. According to the latest studies by this group of experts buildings and housing sector in general are the biggest consumers of energy by the community and at the same time they present the biggest potential for improvement. In this respect the Working group analysed three basic strategies to improve the sustainability of the alpine building stock:

1. reducing energy consumption,
2. improving energy efficiency and
3. substituting fossils by renewable energy sources

I am sorry that the publication is not available yet, since today's workshop would be a good opportunity to discuss some of its findings, but I will gladly inform the working group about the conclusions of today's meeting.

Last, but not least, I would like to point out that I am not here today just for the topic itself, though it is a very important subject, I am also here to show our support for the activities carried out by our partners, the Alpine Towns of the Year and to foster ideas for our future cooperation. I am very much looking forward to today's and tomorrow's meeting and I wish everyone good and successful conference.