

**Chair's Summary of the
seventh informal meeting between representatives of the governing bodies of the UNECE
Multilateral Environmental Agreements and the Committee of Environmental Policy**

held on 26 October 2015 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva

The seventh informal meeting between representatives of the governing bodies of the UNECE multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and the Committee of Environmental Policy (CEP) was chaired by Mr. Massimo Cozzone, Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention. For the first time, NGO representatives participated as observers.

The key objectives of this meeting were to: (a) Review the informal guidance “Towards enhanced cooperation of UNECE MEAs”; (b) continue discussion on financing of MEAs; (c) further exchange ideas on the involvement of MEAs in the next Environment for Europe (Efe) Ministerial Conference; (d) exchange information on the opening of MEAs to countries beyond the UNECE region; and (e) prepare for the presentation on MEAs at the 21st session of the CEP.

1. Opening

The Chair opened the meeting. Sergiusz Ludwiczak, Acting Director of the UNECE Environment Division, welcomed the participants (see annex for the list of participants). He informed that the secretariat has started internal discussions on how to align the various work programmes to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. UNECE was also exploring how overall it could best support member States in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He stressed the potential for cooperation among MEAs and the need for awareness-raising among political decision-makers on the benefits of MEAs when implementing SDGs.

2. a) Review of informal guidance “Towards enhanced cooperation of UNECE MEAs”

The representatives discussed common approaches to the use of MEAs in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They noted that MEAs are unique tools that can help countries achieve the SDGs, in particular by addressing cross-cutting issues. It was agreed to update the informal guidance document in the light of the changes in MEAs and the global context as follows:

- Add a section on the opening of the MEAs beyond the UNECE region
- Update text with references to the 2030 Agenda and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 in the introduction and in a new specific section
- Reinforce the section on resources by including information on MEA financing
- Add an annex on synergistic activities, updated for each meeting and available on the web.

The secretariat was requested to prepare a skeleton update of whole document and circulate to MEA Bureaux (through the chairs) with inputs due by the end of January 2016.

The representatives were also informed that the secretariat is preparing, as an internal exercise, a mapping of UNECE MEAs and other processes and activities that might contribute to the achievement of SDGs, as well as identifying partners. It was agreed that this document would be finalized internally by UNECE and then shared electronically with the MEA Bureaux to gather their views. The revised version could serve as an information document for the Efe Batumi Conference in June 2016, specifically for the possible agenda item dedicated to MEAs, Regional Environmental Centres (RECs) and Environmental Performance Reviews (EPRs).

2. b) Financing of MEAs

Mr. Ludwiczak reported that comments by MEA Chairs on the document “Secretariats to ECE multilateral environmental agreements — the way forward” had been taken into account and the revised document had been submitted to the UNECE Executive Committee. At its June 2015 session, the Committee discussed raising awareness of the importance of sustainable and predictable funding

of MEAs. In addition, the discussion within the secretariat on defining MEA workplan core and non-core activities had yet to be concluded. Results of the internal discussion, including next steps, will be shared with the MEA Bureaux (through chairs) for comments and review by mid-January 2016. The core/non-core concept could then be either the subject of a dedicated half-day workshop for the representatives, or presented by the secretariat at the individual MEA Bureau meetings.

3. MEA contribution to the “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference in Batumi

The Chair of CEP informed the meeting about the 8th EfE Ministerial Conference scheduled to take place in Batumi, Georgia from 6 to 8 June 2016. One agenda item might be dedicated to MEAs, RECs and EPRs. The representatives tentatively agreed to showcase success examples but focus also on challenges and gaps that could hamper accession or implementation of MEAs at the national level, or prevent MEAs offering maximum support to the achievement of SDGs.

A small group of representatives volunteered to work on a concept for the agenda item from the MEA perspective and then to seek the agreement of the other representatives. The group will include Maria Galambos (Water), Jasmina Karba (Industrial Accidents) and Tina Skårman (Pollutants Release and Transfer Registers). The concept will be circulated by 22 February 2016.

As agreed under item 2.a), the secretariat will share an SDG mapping with MEA Bureaux (through the chairs) in the next 1–2 months, inviting inputs, and foresee it as an information paper to the EfE Conference. Also, as background, practical examples of how these tools support implementation of SDGs at the national level, and at the regional or international levels, could be provided to the EfE Conference.

4. Tour de table to update on MEA opening beyond UNECE region

The Water Convention informed the meeting that the amendment for global accession entered into force in 2013 but was not immediately operational, as all countries that were parties at the moment of adoption of the amendment needed to ratify the amendment. The last country needed had just ratified. Once the ratification would be deposited with the United Nations Headquarters there would be no obstacle or precondition to any United Nations Member State joining the Convention.

The Industrial Accidents Convention informed that it was presently discussing an amendment that might include opening for global accession. The political will was there and the substance of the convention calls for the global opening.

5. Preparation for MEAs presentation at CEP

Participants prepared for the MEA presentation to the 21st session of CEP, beginning the following day, in particular on the role of MEAs in the post-2015 development agenda and how MEAs could facilitate the achievement of the SDGs.

6. Election of new Chair

The Chair informed the meeting that he would cease his function as Chair of the Water Convention in November 2015. Anna Engleryd, Chair of the Air Convention, was elected as the new Chair of the informal meetings.

7. Next meeting

The next meeting will take place on 6 December 2016, back-to-back with the 22nd session of CEP. The Chair will agree with the secretariat if there is a need for an additional small meeting before that in order to prepare for the Batumi Conference and to exchange further information on MEA financing. This date will be communicated in due course.

Annex: List of participants



Informal Meeting of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the 5 MEA's and their protocols

Geneva, 26 October 2015

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