

**Chair's Summary from
the meeting between the representatives of the governing bodies
of the ECE Environmental Conventions and the Committee on Environmental Policy**

16 April 2012, Geneva

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Chris Dijkens, Chairperson of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents.

The purpose of the meeting was to follow up on the MEAs' contribution to the Rio+20 process, finalize the MEAs' input to the ECE review of the Environment Subprogramme and to continue discussion on identifying and applying potential synergies between the MEAs based on a draft paper "Towards enhanced cooperation of UNECE MEAs", made available by a drafting group comprising Mr. Dijkens, Ms. Jasmina Karba and Ms. Sybille Vermont.

1. The Conventions' contribution to Rio+20

A. Ms. Monika Linn, Principal Adviser to the ECE Executive Secretary, updated the meeting on the current stage of preparations for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20 Conference) and the next steps to be undertaken.

She referred to the degree of complexity of the preparatory process, including the drafting of the outcome document, which at present counts over 200 pages and includes the original text, the text added as a result of contributions and the possible compromise text as proposed by the Bureau of the preparatory process.

Ms. Linn informed that Mr. Sven Alkalaj, the newly appointed Executive Secretary of UNECE, will represent the organization at the Rio+20 Conference. She also provided information on other preparatory aspects in which the UNECE is involved such as participation in side events and identifying speakers for them and drew the attention of the meeting to a publication "From Transition to Transformation - Sustainable and Inclusive Development in Europe and Central Asia" - an inter-agency report jointly prepared, within the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM), by 13 UN agencies working in the UNECE region.

B. Ms. Elisabete Quintas Da Silva, Chair of the Committee on Environmental Policy, explained that the member States took very seriously the text additions to the Rio+20 outcome document proposed by ECE MEAs and informed that this joint input was sustained in the current version of the document.

Ms. Quintas Da Silva informed the meeting that two rounds of negotiations are foreseen prior to the Rio+20 Conference.¹ She, therefore, stressed the importance of conveying a message to the national coordinators for the Rio+20 process recalling the need to ensure that the proposals coming from the ECE MEAs are retained in the final text of the outcome document. Ms. Quintas also cautioned the participants that the negotiators at the global level are less receptive to including regional initiatives.

To this end, the participants decided to prepare a joint statement that should be sent to the national focal points through the Chair of the Bureau of each MEA. This message should stress the

¹ At the time of finalizing this summary, the Bureau of the Rio+20 Conference decided that an additional negotiating session prior to the Conference will take place from 29 May to 2 June 2012.

importance of retaining the proposals and good examples from the ECE region in the final version of the “Rio+20” outcome document.²

They further agreed that, at this stage of negotiations, the preferred option would be to work on the basis of the co-Chairs Summary of the Regional Preparatory Meeting held in December 2011 in order to ensure that all the proposals from the ECE MEAs are kept in the text rather than coming forward with new or additional proposals.

2. Joint message from the MEAs to be expressed by the Chair of the CEP when meeting with the ECE Executive Committee (EXCOM) within the review of the Environment Subprogramme

Ms. Quintas Da Silva emphasized the importance of transmitting a strong supportive message from the MEAs to the EXCOM during its meeting in May 2012.³ She said that the Review of the 2005 ECE Reform currently carried out by member States is important to the ECE and its subprogrammes as it intends to draw conclusions on the future priorities and possible reallocation of resources. She considered that, although the work under the Environment Subprogramme is appreciated by the ECE member States, it is wise to deliver strong arguments in support of the Subprogramme, including the MEAs. The EXCOM will be provided with a written document on the activities of the Subprogramme, according to an agreed template (a draft was made available to the participants before this meeting), and a presentation by the CEP Chair. Ms. Quintas also stressed the importance of the outreach with the Missions and the Ministries for Foreign Affairs of the ECE member States prior to the planned meeting.

The participants discussed the message to be conveyed to the EXCOM on behalf of the MEAs, which should aim at promoting the work under the five ECE MEAs. It was agreed that the message should highlight both relevant achievements and future challenges.

The following was agreed:

- With regard to the written document mentioned above: that the Chairs of the MEAs would provide the secretariat with comments. If needed and time-allowing, a second round of comments prior to the submission of the document may take place⁴.
- With regard to the CEP Chair’s presentation to the EXCOM: that the Chairs of the Bureaux would jointly prepare 4 to 5 slides on MEAs highlighting their achievements, future priorities and challenges. This presentation should aim at convincing the member States that the Subprogramme is using its resources to the maximum levels of productivity and that opportunities for synergies are being used. Mr. Dijkens agreed to coordinate the process of compiling inputs in collaboration with the secretariat.⁵

² This task was accomplished in the week following the meeting between the representatives of the governing bodies of the ECE MEAs.

³ This meeting has now been confirmed and will take place on 21 May 2012.

⁴ This task was also accomplished.

⁵ In progress at the time of finalizing this summary.

3. Further exchange of views in order to identify possible synergies between the ECE MEAs

Mr. Dijkens informed the meeting about the results of the work carried out by the drafting group established at the first meeting in November 2011 and introduced a strategic paper on possible synergies between the conventions together with suggestions for more efficient and effective working arrangements. He noted the active engagement of many representatives of the governing bodies of the MEAs in providing numerous constructive comments to the document in advance to this meeting.

The participants exchanged views on possible options for further strengthening cooperation among the MEAs and welcomed the initiative of jointly identifying synergies. The participants agreed that collaboration brings an added value in being able to approach challenges in an integrated manner but also in terms of recognition by the stakeholders and contribution to the professional image of the MEAs. At the same time, it was underlined that artificial synergies should not be undertaken.

Based on a few concrete initiatives, which were jointly implemented, the participants assessed very positively the usefulness of meetings among the representatives of the governing bodies of the Conventions. They agreed to continue this effective process and recommended that future meetings are organized based on needs and emerging challenges, which require joint action. These meetings should be seen as an informal framework and a forum to meet, to exchange good practice and to discuss common issues. They should be complemented by an informal communication, such as exchange of e-mails.

The meeting considered the document to be a good basis for discussion and provided comments to its text. The participants agreed that the paper should be a living document and at the same time should be seen as one that reflects the strategic directions for future cooperation and joint actions. At the same time, the participants reiterated that the MEAs are independent and that their individual identity should be reflected in the strategy document.

The participants agreed on the following next steps:

- The drafting group was entrusted with the task to revise the text and produce a new version of the document based on the outcome of the discussions, which will be circulated for comments.
- The Bureaux should look into identifying possible synergies among the MEAs with a particular focus on logistical and procedural issues. With the basis on these findings, the Bureaux are expected to produce a draft proposal on synergies to be submitted to the next meeting.

4. Any other business

A. Meeting with the Director-General for Environment of the European Commission.

Mr. Marco Keiner, Director, Environment Division, briefed the participants about a strategic meeting, he, Mr. Chris Dijkens and Mr. Sergiusz Ludwiczak had with Mr. Karl Falkenberg, Director-General of the European Commission's DG Environment in Brussels on 26 March 2012.

The meeting organized initially to discuss the enhancement of the partnership between the Industrial Accidents and the LRTAP Conventions with the European Commission also aimed to present the wider ECE environmental activities and to explore possibilities of cooperation with the DG

Environment and to solicit support from the DG Environment for possible joint future activities. An agreement was reached by which the European Commission would provide political support to the initiatives introduced by the ECE Environment Division, in particular those activities that would strengthen the implementation of ECE MEAs, while the ECE would at the same time promote relevant EU Directives within the UNECE region, in particular in the countries neighbouring the EU and beyond.*

The Director-General accepted the invitation to visit Geneva to further discuss and identify areas where cooperation between the DG Environment and the ECE Environment Division could benefit both partners. Such a visit could take place in the second half of this year, and be possibly organized in conjunction with a meeting between the representatives of the governing bodies of the ECE MEAs and the CEP.

B. Eighteenth session of the Committee on Environmental Policy (Geneva, 17 - 20 April 2012).

Ms. Quintas Da Silva invited the Chairs of the MEAs to attend the eighteenth session of the CEP and informed the meeting about the organization of item 7 of the Agenda "Multilateral environmental agreements: strengthening of capacity for implementation and their application to support a green economy".

C. The participants tentatively agreed on their next meeting to be held in November 2012.

* Due to questions and concerns raised about the content of this sentence, the following explanation is provided: The said meeting was organized to discuss with the Director-General the possibilities of cooperation between the European Commission's DG Environment and the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents as well as the Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution Convention and to solicit support from the DG for possible joint future activities. The meeting was also aimed to present the wider ECE environmental activities to the Director-General. With regard to the two mentioned Conventions, the ECE provided information on: (i) missions to the ECE member countries of Central Asia to discuss the status of ratification and implementation of the LRTAP Convention and its protocols as well as other ECE MEAs and to identify the challenges and possible solutions, including assistance activities; (ii) a series of workshops to share information and exchange good practice on policy options and actions undertaken by ECE member countries to meet national emission ceilings under the ECE LRTAP Gothenburg Protocol and the EU National Emission Ceilings Directive; (iii) assistance activities related to enhancing industrial safety at hazardous installations in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia with the aim of sharing information and exchanging good practice achieved by ECE member countries under the ECE Industrial Accidents Convention and the EU Seveso Directive. The Director-General expressed support for the above initiatives, which he agreed would strengthen the implementation of ECE MEAs. There was no intention to make any "agreement" between DG Environment and the ECE secretariat on conditions for cooperation nor was there one reached at the said meeting.

List of Participants



Attachment 1

Meeting between the representatives of the governing bodies of the ECE Environmental Conventions and the Committee of Environmental Policy

16 April 2012

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