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Joint UNECE – WHO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Transport, Environment and Health

(First session, 26-27 November 2001)

**SUMMARY REPORT OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE JOINT UNECE – WHO
AD HOC EXPERT GROUP ON TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH**

1. The Joint UNECE-WHO Ad Hoc Expert Group (Tripartite Expert Group) was convened in accordance with the mandate presented by the first High-level Meeting on Transport, Environment and Health held in Geneva on 4 May 2001¹.
2. The first session of the Tripartite Expert Group was attended by representatives from 31 Member States as well as from UNEP, the European Commission, REC and ISDE.

Election of officers and organization of work

3. In compliance with its terms of reference², the first session of the Tripartite Expert

¹ Summary Report of the High-Level Meeting on Transport, Environment and Health (ECE/AC.21/2001/3 EUR/00/502609/3)

² As included in the Report of the Fourth Session of the Joint Meeting, (JMTE/2001/5) as well as in the Report of the 4th Meeting of the London Charter Steering group

Group was co- chaired by three members of the Bureau of the Expert Group representing transport, environment and health ministries. Mrs. Ursula ULRICH-VOGTLIN, Head of the Health and Environment Unit of the Federal Office of Public Health, Switzerland, chaired the discussion under the agenda item on 'Priority issues on transport, environment and health'. Mr. Robert THALER, Head of Division of the Division of Transport, Mobility, Regional Planning and Noise from the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management served as chairman for the discussions on the agenda item on 'Options available for addressing the priority issues'. Mr. Bert Jan GRIFFOEN, Councillor at the Division for International Affairs Ministry of Transport and Public Works, Netherlands, took the chair for summarizing the conclusions of the discussions and for agreeing on the further steps in preparing the 2nd High-level Meeting on Transport, Environment and Health.

Priority issues on transport, environment and health

4. After the welcoming words from the UNECE and WHO secretariats, the Expert Group discussed Conference Room Paper of 14 November 2001 "Identification of Priority areas for the Pan-European process on Transport, Environment and Health", drafted by a consultant to the WHO and UNECE secretariats, with support of the Swiss government and in cooperation with the two secretariats.

5. On the basis of the Conference Room Paper and in line with the mandate given by the High-level Meeting, the Expert Group identified priority areas for further work at the pan-European level with a view to

- (a) rationalizing the transport, environment and health processes within the WHO and UNECE (follow-up processes to the London Charter and to the Vienna Programme of Joint Action, POJA)
- (b) identifying the elements of a possible framework convention
- (c) contributing to the mid-term review of the POJA and to the assessment of the priorities of the London Charter Plan of Action.

6. The meeting agreed that further work should focus on three priority areas presented in the Conference Room Paper and considered specific actions to be carried out within these areas, as follows:

- (a) Integration of transport, environment and health goals
 - Elaboration of national strategies for transport sustainable for health and the environment

- Establishment of targets, in line with the London Charter and the POJA, identification of indicators for monitoring of the implementation and impacts, development of reporting mechanisms
 - Dissemination of information and best practices through, e.g. a Clearing House (also in Russian language)
 - Capacity building
 - Development of institutional mechanisms for the integration of the environment and health concerns into transport policies with participation of health and environment sector representatives in the decision making process at different levels.
- (b) Promoting demand for transport that is sustainable for health and the environment
- Elaboration of investment strategies influencing modal split towards sustainable transport (including in particular projects funded by the international financial institutions in the countries with economies in transition, CIS/NIS countries)
 - Development of measures (both incentives and disincentives, e.g. regulatory measures, economic instruments, awareness raising and training) influencing the modal split towards healthier and more environmental friendly modes of transport for both freight and passenger transport.
 - Elaboration of sustainable transport plans by large private and public enterprises for both passenger and freight transport (including management of freight logistics and optimizing the load factor)
- (c) Urban transport³
- Agreement on provisions that require agglomerations (urban and suburban) beyond a defined size to establish urban plans on transport sustainable for health and the environment and to report to the national authorities on a defined set of indicators. (This point should be developed in consultation with city networks to identify the government level support needed)
 - Development of measures for promoting public transport, cycling and walking; with special attention given to the increased travel for leisure and shopping - in addition to travel for work and to the importance of land use planning (these issues should also be the focus of demand side management measures)
 - Encouragement of public procurement practices that promote public transport vehicles with low or zero emissions.
7. The representative of the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) presented the outcome of the Meeting of High level officials on Transport sustainable for

³ 3 actions referred to are also applicable to a great extent to sensitive areas

environment and health held in Szentendre, Hungary on 26 – 27 March 2000. She highlighted the good coherence between the priority areas expressed at that meeting and those agreed upon by the Tripartite Expert Group.

8. Expert Group stressed the importance of further considering the special circumstances and priority needs of the NIS/ CIS countries and of making sure that appropriate mechanisms are in place for taking them into account (e.g. dissemination of information in Russian language).

Options available for addressing the priority issues

9. Under this agenda item the Expert Group considered, as a basis for the discussion, Conference room paper “Options available for addressing the priority issues - Legal and policy issues for the assessment of the appropriateness of the elaboration of an international instrument on transport, environment and health” prepared by a second consultant to the UNECE and WHO/ Euro secretariats with support from the Danish government.

10. The Expert Group considered that progress towards transport sustainable for health and the environment at the pan-European level requires an improved implementation of the actions relevant to the three priority areas identified, and that further work towards the preparation of the 2nd High Level Meeting on Transport, Environment and Health should focus on how implementation could be improved in the most effective way, taking into consideration the political and economical implications involved. The following scenarios should be further analysed:

- Rationalisation of the two processes with a focus on joint implementation of the agreed priorities (with or without the development of a new soft law instrument as a basis for the rationalized processes);
- Development of a Framework Convention on Transport, Environment and Health.

11. The Expert Group was invited to provide written contributions and comments concerning the priority actions and options for their implementation to the two secretariats at the latest by 20 December 2001. They were also invited to consider providing additional resources for further work.

12. The Expert Group agreed that documentation to be prepared for the 2nd High Level Meeting should cover:

- a) Reports on the implementation of the Vienna Plan of Joint Action and the London Charter

- b) A document on the priority areas and the specific actions to be carried out
- c) A document on options for their implementation, including the rationalization of the London and Vienna processes (consolidation of institutional mechanisms and priorities for future action) and the possibility of developing a Framework Convention.

The above documents would form the basis for a short ministerial declaration.

13. As requested by the first High-level Meeting of 4 May 2001, The Expert Group discussed the modalities for convening a 2nd High Level Meeting on Transport, Environment and Health. It was noted that in accordance with the Ministerial Declaration of the London Conference, the meeting is to be convened at the level of Ministers or their representatives. It was proposed to hold the 2nd High Level Meeting on Friday, 5 July 2002 in Geneva.

14. The delegate of Austria offered to host in Vienna a meeting of the Bureau, the UNECE and WHO Secretariats and other interested member States, with a view to facilitating the drafting of the documents to be discussed at the 2nd Meeting of the Joint UNECE WHO Ad-Hoc Expert Group on Transport, Environment and Health. In addition to the members of the Bureau, the following member States expressed their interest in participating in the meeting: Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Spain, the United Kingdom, the European Commission. Proposed date for the meeting of the "Friends of the Bureau" is 24-25 January 2002.

15. The Expert Group decided to postpone the date of the 2nd Joint UNECE WHO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Transport, Environment and Health to 18-19 March 2001.
