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

(Second session, 18-19 March 2002)

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

1. Introduction

1. The second Joint UNECE-WHO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Transport, Environment and Health (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 Tripartite Expert Group followed up decisions made at its first session (Geneva, 26-27 November 2001) as well as discussions held during an informal meeting of the “Friends of the Bureau” (Vienna, 24-25 January 2002).

3. The second session of the Expert Group was attended by representatives from 25 Member States as well as from UNEP, the European Commission, Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC), International Society of Doctors for the Environment (ISDE)

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

and the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF).

2. Election of officers and organization of work

4. For its second session, The Expert Group re-elected the co-chairpersons of its previous session, who represented transport, environment and health ministries, in line with the terms of reference of the Tripartite Expert Group². 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 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.

5. The Expert Group elected Mr. Jiri BENDL, Director of the Environmental Strategy Department from the Czech Ministry of the Environment to replace Mr. Jan JANIGA from the Slovak Ministry of the Environment as the second representative of the environment sector for the Bureau of the Expert Group.

3. Priority issues on transport, environment and health

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

7. The paper had been revised to reflect the comments received during and after the first session of the Expert Group, as well as the proposals of the "Friends of the Bureau". It describes the broad priority areas for further action that had been agreed upon, i.e. 1) integration of transport, environment and health aspects into transport policy; 2) management of transport demand and modal shift; and 3) urban areas. In relation to these priority areas, the paper proposes specific actions to be carried out within the joint framework of the WHO and UNECE.

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

8. The Expert Group endorsed the priority areas and further discussed the specific actions referred to in the Conference Room paper. Following a more detailed discussion on the paper, a number of comments and drafting proposals were raised, for consideration by the secretariats and the consultant in finalizing the paper. The Members of the Expert Group were invited to provide their comments in writing to the secretariats until the 22 March 2002.

9. In addition, and in line with the recommendations of the Friends of the Bureau, the Expert Group agreed that two further issues needed to be given special attention, either within the three priority areas, or as additional crosscutting issues for the future joint action. These issues include: a) special needs and problems related to the sustainability of transport systems in the countries with economies in transition (with a focus on the NIS, and the Balkan States) and b) sensitive areas. Two drafting groups, were set up to work out a text proposal for each of the two issues and to suggest where in the Conference Room Paper the paragraphs should be inserted. The secretariats were requested to forward the revised paper to the Expert Group for comments.

4. Options available for addressing the priority issues

10. As background documents, the Expert Group considered a note “Pan-European Programme on Transport, Environment and Health” prepared by the UNECE-WHO secretariats on the basis of the feedback received from the “Friends of the Bureau”, and a revised Conference room paper “Options available for addressing the priority issues” (including an annex “On Possible Elements of an Instrument on Transport, Environment and Health”) prepared by a second consultant to the UNECE and WHO/ Euro secretariats with support from the Danish government.

11. The Expert Group focused its attention on the note from the secretariats which proposes the establishment of a Pan-European Programme with three main components; 1) a programme of work based on the priority areas and actions as agreed upon and referred to in the Conference Room Paper on “Priority areas”; 2) a tripartite institutional setting for its implementation and 3) means and mechanisms required for the effective implementation and follow-up of the Programme.

12. The Expert Group welcomed the proposal on the Pan-European Programme as a pragmatic and adequate approach for the implementation of the priorities identified. It agreed to recommend the establishment of such a Programme to the Ministerial Meeting to be held on 5 July 2002. It was suggested to call the proposed programme “THE PEP” to stand for Transport, Health and the

Environment Pan-European Programme.

13. While several Experts viewed THE PEP as an alternative to the Framework Convention, several others considered them as not being mutually exclusive. In the latter case, THE PEP would be seen as a first step leaving the option open for entering into negotiations of a legally binding commitment in the future, if deemed appropriate.

14. The Expert Group discussed how to best provide THE PEP with the necessary resources and visibility to ensure that it can deliver against its objectives more effectively than the POJA and London Charter follow-up processes have been able to do.

15. The establishment of a process that brings together three sectors and two international organizations was acknowledged to be an unprecedented endeavour. The tripartite nature of the WHO-UNECE cooperation on transport, environment and health was presented as an element of strength and cohesion for the process taking also into account broad participation of relevant IGOs, NGOs and other stakeholders. However, while the closer co-operation between the UNECE and WHO would certainly facilitate achieving the objectives of THE PEP, it cannot be considered in itself as a guarantee of successful implementation. The political support from the three sectoral ministries and the availability of sufficient resources for enabling the active and full participation of the NIS representatives to THE PEP as well as for carrying out the concrete actions were seen as necessary conditions for ensuring successful results.

16. The Expert Group recommended that the possibility of using existing funding sources and financing mechanisms for the implementation of the Programme should be further examined and made use of to the extent possible.

17. The secretariats were requested to provide initial estimates of the costs involved in the implementation of the actions proposed in THE PEP to allow Member States to have a better idea of the order of magnitude of the resources expected to be necessary for implementing the Programme and to consider possible reallocation of existing resources as well as identification of other possible means to support the programme and need for future investments.

18. In subsequent discussions, the different components of the Programme were considered in detail and the secretariats were provided with a number of specific comments and drafting proposals to be taken into account in the further elaboration of the document on THE PEP.

19. The Expert Group agreed that the work plan will focus on the **priorities identified** and concentrate on their effective implementation. It was emphasised that the actions to be taken in the future would need to take stock of the ongoing processes in the field and build on the progress already achieved.

20. Concerning the future implementation of those elements of the Vienna Programme of Joint Action (POJA) that do not fall under the priority areas identified (e.g. relating to the environmental impact of aircraft and ships), the UNECE secretariat explained that the mid-term review of the POJA being prepared for submission to the Ministerial Meeting will explicitly address these concerns. The mid-term review will take stock of the progress achieved in implementation of the POJA elements and aim at identifying forums for their effective implementation, as appropriate. Similarly, the few elements of the London Charter that are not within the scope of the tripartite process will be considered in the assessment report of the implementation of the London Charter.

21. It was felt however that should Member States wish to pursue activities related to items in the POJA or in the London Charter in areas other than the priority ones identified, they should be left free to do so and be given the possibility to report on their activities within the tripartite institutional setting to be established³.

22. With regards to **the institutional setting** for the Pan-European Programme, the Expert Group agreed that the intergovernmental institutional mechanism for the follow-up of the Programme to be established by the Ministerial Meeting should include; 1) a single political decision-making body (Tripartite Steering Committee); 2) a bureau to assist in the implementation of its decisions, and 3) issue-based task forces for implementation of specific actions, as needed. It was judged important to further clarify that this new institutional setting would replace the existing mechanisms established under the Vienna and London follow-up processes, in line with the request of the First High-level Meeting⁴. The secretariats were requested to draft the terms of reference for the Tripartite Steering Committee and to provide further clarifications as to the position of the new body within the inter-institutional hierarchy of UNECE and WHO.

23. The Expert Group stressed that the intergovernmental mechanism to be established should be lean and active and not involve overly costly and bureaucratic procedures. It was however understood that some of the specific activities identified require substantive funding, e.g. setting

³ These possible activities are expected to be of limited duration and in no need for secretariat support.

⁴ Conference Room Paper of 25 April 2001, "Rationalization of work at the international level in the fields of transport, environment and health", Note by the WHO/Euro and UNECE secretariats, endorsed by the High-level Meeting

up of an effective Clearing House for dissemination of information and capacity building would require dedicated resources, and adequate funds. Finally, it was fully recognized that the new institutional mechanism would need to be serviced by a joint WHO-UNECE secretariat with adequate resources.

24. Some delegations advocated for a phased approach, starting with a speedy delivery of practical actions such as dissemination of relevant already available material and expertise through bilateral contacts between countries while waiting for a more refined mechanisms to be established and fully operational.

5. Preparation of the Ministerial Meeting on Transport, Environment and Health (Geneva, 5 July 2002)

25. The Expert Group discussed the documents to be submitted for the adoption of the Ministers at the Ministerial Meeting on 5 July as well as the agenda for the Meeting. To ensure that the further preparatory work is carried out in an optimal manner, the Expert Group decided to hold an additional session in Geneva on 2 and 3 May 2002.

26. The Expert Group agreed that the Ministerial documents should include the following

a) Ministerial declaration, containing the main decisions to be taken and including references to the documents below

b) Document on the Pan-European Programme: A concise work plan laying out a) the priority areas and actions identified, b) the institutional setting and c) the aspects related to implementation of the PEP and to resources involved

c) An executive summary of the Legal Options paper outlining the pros and cons of negotiating a Framework Convention and identifying the possible elements of such an instrument

d) Mid-term review of the Programme of Joint Action on Transport and the Environment and the assessment report of the implementation of the London Charter Plan of Action

27. The Expert Group agreed on keeping the Ministerial documents short with more detailed material annexed or in background papers.

28. The UNECE and WHO secretariats presented the outlines of the POJA mid-term review

and the Charter assessment reports, which are currently being prepared. The POJA mid-term report will consist of two main parts: The first part takes stock of what has been achieved during the past five years, highlights a number of success stories in the implementation of the programme elements as well as focuses on the reasons for the gaps in the implementation of a number of other elements. The second part of the review will be forward looking, stating that the UNECE activities on transport and the environment will be enlarged to include the health sector and will be carried out within the joint framework of the WHO and UNECE. The second part will shortly reiterate the joint priorities identified for the further action as well as discuss the future implementation of those elements that do not fall within the scope of the priorities. The mid-term review will be carried out on the basis of the information received from the Member States until now, and will not involve sending out of further questionnaires. It will be a factual document presented for information for the Ministers at the High-level Meeting. The Assessment report of the London Charter implementation presents a similar structure. It is being carried out on the basis of the questionnaire sent out by the WHO late last year.

29. The Secretariats were requested to provide drafts of the above documents in time for the third session of the Expert Group. The Group agreed that on 2-3 May it should focus its attention on finalizing the Ministerial Declaration and the work plan on the PEP.

30. The Expert Group discussed the preliminary agenda for the Ministerial Meeting. It was suggested to start informal discussions already on the evening of the 4 July over a dinner. It was recommended secondly to start the Meeting of 5 July with general discussion on the decisions to be made. The Expert Group agreed thereafter on holding a Ministerial Panel with the theme “Moving towards transport sustainable for health and the environment– A regional message to Johannesburg”. As regards to the composition of the panel, it was suggested to invite a Minister representing each of the transport, environment and health sectors, as well as a Finance Minister from a transition country to take part in the discussions. In addition it was recommended to invite a Commissioner of the European Commission, a representative from an International Financial Institution such as EBRD as well as a NGO representative. The end of the meeting day would be reserved for the adoption of the Ministerial decisions. The Expert Group did not recommend proceeding to any signing ceremony for the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration.
