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COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY
**Regional Consultative Meeting for the World Summit
on Sustainable Development**
Open-ended Drafting Group
(Geneva, 3-4 September 2001, Geneva)
(Item 2 of the provisional agenda)

PRELIMINARY DRAFT MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Submitted by the Chairman of the Regional Consultative Meeting
for the World Summit on Sustainable Development¹

Introduction

1. We, Ministers of member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), met in Geneva on 24-25 September 2001 at the Regional Ministerial Meeting for the World Summit on Sustainable Development to review progress made since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio Conference) in 1992, to outline key policy issues, priorities and follow-up, in order to provide input to the preparatory process for the Summit in Johannesburg (South Africa) in September 2002.
2. We take note of the Regional Assessment Report on progress made in the implementation of Agenda 21, which has highlighted the diversity in our region and underscored major problems on the road to sustainable development in the region[, *particularly the following:*
 - *The conversion to less resource-consuming industries and to services and progress in eco-efficiency have contributed to some decoupling of economic growth from resource use, but gains have been offset by the impact of resource- and pollution-intensive production processes and lifestyles, combined with increased mobility and an overall increase in production and consumption volumes;*
 - *Environmental problems such as climate change and desertification, and pressures on natural resources and ecosystems have intensified. Poor local and indoor air quality, and the lack of access to safe drinking water diminish people's possibility to enjoy a healthy life;*
 - *The rise in poverty and human insecurity continues in many parts of the region. Unemployment and ageing populations raise new concerns about social exclusion. Armed conflict in parts of the region has led to the loss of human life and to a drastic degradation of economic, social and environmental conditions].*

¹ Prepared with the assistance of the joint secretariat taking into account the views of the drafting group that met on 27 July 2001 in Geneva. This document has not been formally edited.

3. We acknowledge that regional environmental conventions and the “Environment for Europe” process should continue to play a significant role in developing the region in a sustainable way. We take note of the conclusions on sustainable development of the Ministerial Council Meeting of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development of May 2001, the Sustainable Development Strategy of the European Union (EU) of June 2001, the results of subregional meetings on sustainable development held recently in Bucharest (Romania) and Almaty (Kazakhstan), and the progress made in the EU enlargement process and in the implementation of sustainable development strategies and programmes in the Arctic, Baltic, Mediterranean, Nordic and other subregions.

4. We reaffirm our strong commitment to sustainable development which we regard as the mutually supportive integration of economic development, social development, and environmental protection for the benefit of present and future generations. We will accelerate the implementation of the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21 and other commitments made by the international community at Rio and the United Nations General Assembly, at its special (“Rio+5”) session in 1997, as well as of the United Nations Millennium Declaration by dealing with economic, social and environmental policies in a balanced and mutually reinforcing way. We support the preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development *[which should focus on poverty eradication and the promotion of sustainable production and consumption patterns. A gender perspective should permeate all its preparations.]*. The Summit should demonstrate the readiness of all actors - governments and major groups – to continue to work together, in good faith and in the spirit of global partnership, taking into account the particular needs and priorities of different countries and regions.

5. We call for attendance and representation at the highest political level at the Summit.

I. PRIORITIES FOR ACTION AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

6. In view of the need to accelerate the implementation in the region of international development goals agreed at recent United Nations summits, we agree to strengthen or develop policies to increase social cohesion, reduce unemployment, help tackle social inequality, facilitate adjustment to economic reform, and ensure access to safe drinking water and social services such as health care, taking into account gender-specific aspects in all policy measures. We will seek to ensure that social development targets, as well as health and gender policies, and policies regarding indigenous and local communities are integrated into sustainable development strategies. We agree on the need to reform or improve education systems and the design of learning programmes on sustainable development to increase the general understanding of how to implement and promote sustainable development in practice.

7. Economic sectors have a special responsibility for ensuring environmentally friendly production methods, products and services, taking into consideration environmental effects at all stages of the product life cycle. We will promote the full integration of environmental and social objectives into economic and sectoral plans and programmes, and see to it that energy, transport, industrial, agricultural, forestry, tourism and other relevant policies are designed to support new opportunities for economic development and to reverse those trends that threaten health and the environment.

8. The consumption of renewable and non-renewable resources must not exceed the carrying capacity of the environment. We agree to ensure that economic growth is decoupled from a range of environmental pressures through the removal of distorting subsidies, the use of various policy instruments for the internalization of social and environmental costs, the introduction of environmental management systems and eco-procurement (“green” purchasing), as well as the further promotion of renewable energy and cleaner production. We agree to increase to 10 per cent at least the share of renewable energy in total primary energy supply and to assist in accelerating the development of energy-efficient technologies by 2010. We agree to strive for changes in production and consumption patterns by also promoting eco-design of products, eco-labelling and other consumer information tools to achieve a substantive transformation in value systems, in attitudes and in social behaviour.

9. We will make further efforts to integrate environmental and health strategies and implement targets in this area focusing on issues such as ensuring the safe supply of fresh water, waste-water treatment and sanitation as well as achieving food safety, reducing and managing effectively any possible risk linked to chemicals and genetically modified organisms, and ensuring nuclear safety in the region. We will develop the existing regional process for the integration of transport and environment to tackle the environmental and health problems caused by transport.
10. We will promote the integration of biodiversity concerns into land-use planning, sectoral and pollution-control policies. We will give more attention to establishing and maintaining ecological networks and to the protection and sustainable management of biodiversity in coastal zones, marine ecosystems and mountain areas.
11. We will continue to support national efforts and subregional and regional cooperation on sustainable development which should be strengthened, including through the European Commission, UNECE, the international financial institutions and other international organizations.
12. We will strengthen our support to economies in transition in their efforts to promote economic growth, eradicate poverty and resolve environmental problems. Completion of reforms, implementation of a regulatory framework and improvement in judicial and administrative systems in these countries are needed to secure the foundations of regional sustainable development. We recognize that different levels of economic development in countries of the region may require the application of different approaches and mechanisms to implement Agenda 21.
13. We commit ourselves to ensuring that regional and subregional conventions and protocols on the environment and sustainable development are better implemented and compliance with their requirements is better monitored. The experience gained in developing and implementing regional environmental agreements should be shared with other regions, as appropriate.
14. We will promote the application of the polluter-pays principle to prevent adverse environmental impacts and ensure that those who harm human health or damage the environment are held responsible for their actions. Each country of the region should develop a civil legal regime for damage, including environmental damage, caused by hazardous activities. We will strive to develop effective procedures and mechanisms to further prevent and resolve transboundary environmental disputes and provide redress for environmental damage. We support the development by 2003 of a legally binding instrument on civil liability for transboundary damage caused by hazardous activities, within the scope of the Helsinki (1992) Water and Industrial Accidents Conventions.
15. We will make environmental and health assessment an integral part of the systematic analysis of government policies, plans, programmes and legislation and thus of integrated policy- and decision-making. In this respect, we reconfirm the importance of strategic environmental assessment, support the development of a protocol on strategic environmental assessment to the Espoo Convention for adoption at the Kiev Ministerial Conference in 2003, and will seek to ensure that this protocol enters into force by 2007 at the latest.

II. PRIORITIES FOR ACTION AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL

16. Sustainable development also requires global solutions. The Johannesburg Summit should address obstacles to the implementation of Agenda 21 as well as new challenges and agree on initiatives in a few selected areas where the Summit can add specific value. More precisely, we have outlined several areas of concern as a contribution of this region to the forthcoming dialogue with other regions in preparing the Summit.

A. Poverty eradication

17. We consider poverty eradication and social development central to sustainable development. Country strategies for addressing these issues must include environmental, health, human-settlement and education policies to secure sustainable livelihoods. These strategies should also cover improving governance, rule of law, economic policy and management, broader political participation, respect for human rights, and political accountability. The Summit should reaffirm the international development goals and Millennium Declaration targets and recommend steps to ensure their integrated and coherent implementation.

B. Protecting the natural resource base

18. We agree to operationalize and achieve the international development goal to effectively reverse current trends in the loss of environmental resources at global and national level by 2015 by ensuring that every country will by 2005 be implementing a national strategy for sustainable development. The Summit should agree on specific related sustainable development initiatives [*in the areas of fresh water, energy, land degradation, biodiversity and mountains*]. It should encourage stewardship and conservation to be applied to the full range of sectoral issues.

19. We agree to promote the ratification, implementation of and compliance with, the multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and the drawing-up of new ones, where required. We call upon all countries to fully meet their national commitments, such as limitation and reduction targets for greenhouse-gas emissions. For a large majority of countries in the region this means seeking the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change by 2002, with timely ratification processes, and with the broadest possible support of the international community. We welcome the outcome of the resumed Sixth Conference of the Parties to this Convention held in Bonn (Germany) in July 2001.

C. Globalization

20. Globalization, notably in trade, finance and business, affects people in every country, for instance through global capital flows and multilateral trade agreements. It has presented new opportunities for human development, but it may have significant environmental and social implications. These require new policy responses. We recognize the opportunities and challenges emanating from globalization and agree to contribute towards equitable sharing its benefits for sustainable development to avoid marginalization, exclusion, increased environmental degradation and loss of cultural diversity.

21. The international trading system, including the World Trade Organization, has to play an effective role in contributing to sustainable development and to ensure that the world trade rules and MEAs are mutually reinforcing. We welcome recent initiatives to liberalize preferential market access for the least developed countries, and the moves to eradicate poverty through trade.

22. The private sector plays a key role in the efforts to achieve sustainable development. Measures and endeavours by the business community on corporate responsibility, environmental accountability and exchange of best practices and technologies need to form part of a collaborative effort, which would include public-private partnerships as well as increased international cooperation and a larger involvement of the not-for-profit sector. In this regard, we will promote the United Nations Secretary-General's Global Compact Initiative.

23. New information and communications technologies (ICT) offer possibilities for significant reductions in the use of materials, energy and transport, and potential new directions in environmental policy design, implementation and monitoring. We will work to facilitate the diffusion of these technologies and make them secure and reliable. In the context of using ICT in support of sustainable development strategies, the recently established United Nations ICT Task Force is a promising platform.

D. Strengthening institutions and democratic processes

24. We underline that fair and consistent application of the law, effective enforcement and measures to combat corruption create the type of society in which all people have the opportunity to prosper and the responsibility for sound stewardship of the natural resources on which they depend. We have learned that open, democratic government requires, inter alia, that policy-making should include discussion of the electorate's concerns and interests. National sustainable development strategies should fully embrace this issue.

25. The experience gained in developing and implementing "Local Agenda 21" strategies on sustainable development should be extended worldwide. These strategies should promote innovative local solutions, supporting partnerships of local people, community and voluntary organizations, indigenous peoples, minority groups, local authorities and business, as appropriate. We will encourage all communities to draw up local strategies for sustainable development, building on the experience of existing Local Agendas 21.

[26. We call on the Summit to launch the negotiation process for a global convention on citizens' environmental rights, with the participation of civil society organizations, building on the experience gained with the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters but taking into account the need to respect regional specificities.]

27. There is a need to improve the role and functioning of international environmental institutions. We support the work undertaken under the Governing Council of UNEP to promote the issue of global environmental governance. It is important, in particular, to strengthen the environmental authority of UNEP and to provide it with an adequate and predictable financial basis. We call upon the Summit to discuss also ways and means to ensure compliance with and enforcement of MEAs, and the future role and programme of work of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development. We agree to explore synergies between MEAs in such areas as compliance, public participation and assistance to developing countries and countries with economies in transition in implementing these agreements.

E. Financing sustainable development

28. We recognize the primary role of domestic resources, as well as the role that trade liberalization and private financial flows, notably foreign direct investment, play in generating resources for poverty eradication and sustainable development. These three sources of capital provide by far the greatest levels of financing for sustainable development today and will continue to do so even in the more distant future. An important way to attract and mobilize these resources is to ensure an open and stable enabling environment. A system of free trade, reasonable and efficient regulation, and laws that are predictable, fair and enforceable will both mobilize domestic entrepreneurs and encourage foreign firms to invest in a responsible manner.

29. Financial and technical assistance will remain important for the promotion of sustainable development in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. International assistance flows, including increased official development assistance (ODA), should be encouraged to supplement domestic and private efforts towards sustainable development. It should help developing countries and countries with economies in transition to build and develop the needed domestic capacity, institutions and procedures that will allow them to attract the sources of capital necessary for sustainable development. We support the substantial replenishment of the Global Environment Facility, taking into account its role as the principal financial mechanism for the global environment. Donor countries in the region *[will strive to meet the United Nations target, reinforced at the Rio Conference, raising their ODA to 0.7 per cent of GDP]* They will also coordinate better the assistance to countries in transition and will make it more effective in close cooperation with these countries.

F. Promoting science for decision-making

30. We are deeply committed to enhancing scientific knowledge and to improving the processes of generating, sharing and using science for sustainable development and for more action-oriented interdisciplinary research with greater focus on the prevention and early identification of emerging problems and opportunities. The Summit should urge the scientific community to work with government authorities, the academic community, major groups and international organizations to strengthen science education at all levels and to overcome the communication gaps within the scientific community and between scientists, policy makers and the general public. The Summit should recognize the role of the precautionary principle with respect to setting further targets under MEAs and to using new technologies that may affect the environment and human health. To this end, technology transfer and capacity building for research on sustainable development should be promoted and supported.

[G. The Global Deal

31. The Summit could explore the idea of a "new global deal" on sustainable development, involving all stakeholders and based on common but differentiated responsibilities.]

III. REVIEW OF PROGRESS

32. We agree to review progress in the implementation of our commitments made in this Statement no later than in 2010 at a regional ministerial meeting.