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Item 2 of the provisional agenda

**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE FIFTY-NINTH ANNUAL SESSION
OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

This document summarizes the decisions made during the fifty-ninth session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) which are relevant to the work of the Committee on Environmental Policy (Annual Report, E/2004/37-E/ECE/1416).

In this context, particular attention should be paid to UNECE cooperation with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), which may have implications for the Committee's programme of work, and to the decision to further involve the UNECE principal subsidiary bodies in the budgetary process and the setting of priorities for technical cooperation activities.

UNECE reform (agenda item 4)

1. The Commission decided to commission a comprehensive report on the state of UNECE with the aim of developing recommendations to determine what changes to its role, mandate and functions are necessary in the light of the changes in the European institutional architecture since UNECE was created almost 60 years ago. The report will be guided by the will of member States to avoid duplication, and ensure cooperation, complementarity and efficiencies among intergovernmental organizations (Annual Report, para. 26). All stakeholders, including the Committee on Environmental Policy, will be consulted by the authors.

2. The Commission endorsed the actions proposed by the secretariat and the recommendations proposed by the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work, including recommendations calling for the principal subsidiary bodies to:

- Review biennially their intergovernmental structure, including related advisory groups, and report to the Commission at its annual session (Annual Report, para. 28 (b));
- Evaluate biennially their subsidiary bodies and their programme of work/activities. The results of these evaluations will be presented to the Commission (Annual Report, para. 28 (c) and E/ECE/1415/Add.1).

3. In addition, the Commission decided to further involve the principal subsidiary bodies in the programme planning process (see annotated agenda ECE/CEP/123, item 5).

4. With regard to the priority setting mechanism for technical cooperation activities, the Commission endorsed the proposals by the Group of Experts the setting of priorities for technical cooperation. It was recommended that each principal subsidiary body, at its annual session, should identify the priorities currently underfunded and inform the Group of Experts through the secretariat.

UNECE cooperation with OSCE (agenda item 5)

5. The Commission agreed to continue its cooperation with OSCE. Recently the New Strategy Document of OSCE has provided the basis for a new and deeper relationship between OSCE and UNECE. It accepted the proposal of the Executive Secretary that an inter-secretariat task force should prepare a detailed plan, including resource implications, that would subsequently be submitted to the Commission for its consideration and decision. During the discussion, it was stated that the principal subsidiary bodies should examine the implications of the closer relationship with OSCE for their work (Annual Report, para. 35).

Preparations for, and follow-up to, global and regional conferences (agenda item 7)

6. With regard to follow-up to the Beijing World Conference on Women, the Commission endorsed the proposal to organize a UNECE regional preparatory meeting for Beijing +10 in the last quarter of 2004, as was done in 2000.

7. The Commission noted the success of the first Regional Implementation Forum on Sustainable Development, held in January 2004, and looked forward to the debate within the Commission on Sustainable Development. The exercise proved very useful and should be repeated in future, taking into account developments in the Commission on Sustainable Development.