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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Ad Hoc Preparatory Working Group of Senior Officials  
"Environment for Europe"  
Executive Committee  
(Second session, Geneva, 24 February 2006)

**PREPARATIONS FOR THE SIXTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE  
"ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE"**

**Possible themes for the Agenda of the Belgrade Conference\***

Prepared by the Secretariat in consultation with the Chair

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. At the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Preparatory Working Group of Senior Officials "Environment for Europe" (WGSO) the Chairman requested the secretariat to prepare a revised background paper on possible themes for the agenda of the Belgrade Conference, taking into consideration ideas and comments provided by WGSO participants during and after the meeting. The revised paper should be available to the second meeting of the Executive Committee for discussion. An amended version would then be submitted to the second meeting of the Working Group in June 2006.

2. This paper was prepared on the basis of the Kiev Declaration, a background paper prepared for the first meeting of WGSO (CEP/AC.11/2005/5), outcomes of the discussions of WGSO and inputs provided by partners in the 'Environment for Europe' process. The paper aims at facilitating the discussion on the agenda of the Belgrade Conference.

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\* This document was not formally edited.

3. One of the most important criteria for any agenda item is that it should merit and warrant the attention of Ministers.

4. At the first meeting of WGSO, strong support was expressed for a focus on implementation. The Belgrade event should become a conference of delivery. Three major components within this context were identified: (a) assessment of the effectiveness of agreed commitments and tools (e.g. Environmental Programme for Europe, Kiev Declaration, Environment Strategy for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia<sup>1</sup> (EECCA), multilateral environmental agreements, Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, Millennium Development Goals); (b) analysis of problems in the implementation of existing commitments and their root causes; and (c) presentation of success stories and good practices to be built on for further progress in capacity building and in the implementation of existing commitments. It was suggested that an independent report be prepared as a basis for discussions.

5. The Executive Committee might want to consider a title or, as suggested by the European Union, a single strapline to summarize the Belgrade themes. "*Environment for Europe*": *progress towards a sustainable future* or "*Environment for Europe*": *progress towards sustainable development* are two ideas for discussion suggested by the secretariat.

## **II. POSSIBLE ELEMENTS FOR THE BELGRADE AGENDA**

### A. State of the Environment in the UNECE Region

#### *Monitoring and Assessment*

6. Ministers in Kiev called on the European Environment Agency (EEA) to prepare the fourth assessment report on the state of the environment in Europe for the Belgrade Conference, building on new partnerships, especially with UNECE and UNEP (ECE/CEP/94/Rev.1, para 30). They encouraged international cooperation to improve the comparability of information, data collection and monitoring capacities. The EEA is in the process of preparing the *Belgrade Assessment* on the basis of the report outline that was discussed at the June 2005 session of the UNECE Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment. The Working Group is expected to consider progress in the report preparation and the draft report itself at its two subsequent meetings in 2006.

7. Ministers in Kiev furthermore expressed their support for the work of the UNECE Working Group on Environmental Monitoring, particularly on strengthening environmental information and observation capacity in the EECCA countries. The Working Group is preparing Guidelines to EECCA Governments to help applying a core set of environmental indicators that are consistent with those applied internationally. It also launched the preparation of Guidelines on Improved Enterprise Environmental Monitoring and Reporting in EECCA. Active

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<sup>1</sup> Environmental Partnerships in the UNECE region: Environment Strategy for countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, Strategic Framework (ECE/CEP/105/Rev.1)

involvement of big enterprises in this activity may lead to the organization of a roundtable of Ministers with EECCA business and industry representatives at the Belgrade Conference. Finally, the Working Group's close cooperation with EECCA regional environmental authorities<sup>2</sup> may result in a Recommendation on the use of regional state of the environment reports<sup>3</sup> in decision-making and public information. All three sets of guidelines and recommendations will be presented, through the Committee on Environmental Policy and the Working Group of Senior Officials, to the Belgrade Conference for endorsement.

#### *Environment Performance Reviews (EPRs )*

8. Ministers in Kiev supported the continuation of the EPR programmes of UNECE and OECD. A report harvesting positive impacts of international cooperation in the countries reviewed under the UNECE EPR Programme is envisaged for the Belgrade Conference. It would focus on the implementation of international commitments and their impact on the modernization of national environmental management and practices.

#### B. Thematic Areas

##### *Energy for Sustainable Development*

9. Ministers in Kiev recognized the variety of initiatives undertaken for integrating environmental aspects and sustainable development into energy policy in the region. They welcomed and supported global and regional efforts to improve energy efficiency and increase the share of renewable energy sources.

10. They specifically invited the Energy Charter Secretariat, in cooperation with other relevant international organizations, to report on further progress on energy efficiency efforts at the Belgrade Conference.

11. The Energy Charter Working Group on Energy Efficiency and Related Environmental Aspects at its meeting in November 2005 has confirmed their intention to prepare a progress report on energy efficiency for the Belgrade Conference and asked the Energy Charter Secretariat to develop the format of the report in close cooperation with other relevant international organizations.

##### *Biological Diversity and Ecosystems*

12. Ministers in Kiev endorsed the Resolution on Biodiversity submitted by the PEBLDS<sup>4</sup> Council and committed to halting the loss of biodiversity by the year 2010 in the Pan-European region through national efforts and regional cooperation.

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<sup>2</sup> Environmental Authorities at the subnational level

<sup>3</sup> State of the environment reports at the subnational level

<sup>4</sup> Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy

13. The Belgrade Conference could provide a forum to discuss the activities that have taken place so far in the pan-European region to address the Kiev Resolution on Biodiversity. The achievements, challenges and needs for the pan European region could be assessed and recommendations could be made to support the follow up of the Kiev Resolution on Biodiversity and delivery of the 2010 target by Europe. UNEP and the Council of Europe as joint secretariats for PEBLDS would be willing to prepare and service a session on biodiversity and ecosystems during the ministerial conference.

14. The European ECO-Forum is suggesting a roundtable discussion between Ministers and NGOs at the Belgrade Conference on biodiversity issues in UNECE, with a special focus on the Countdown 2010 Initiative, the PEBLDS role and status, further actions and partnerships in this area.

15. Other issues suggested at the WGSO meeting were water resources management, land degradation and chemicals management. The on-going and planned activities in these areas should be kept in mind in order to avoid possible duplications.

### C. Cross-sectoral Issues

#### *Implementation of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development*

16. Ministers in Kiev recognized the importance of integrating sustainable development into education systems at all levels and invited Ministers of Education and from other relevant government departments to take an active part in the development of the Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) by 2005 (ECE/CEP/94/Rev.1, para 58). The High-level Meeting of Environment and Education Ministries, held in Vilnius, on 17 and 18 March 2005, unanimously adopted the Strategy as well as the Vilnius Framework for its implementation.

17. The Meeting discussed the coordination and review of the implementation of the Strategy. It decided to establish a steering committee to oversee and promote the implementation. It was suggested that the "Environment for Europe" process could be used as a platform for the high-level promotion of the implementation. Many delegations stressed that Education Ministries should have an equal role in possible ESD-related sessions at the "Environment for Europe" conferences. In this respect, a special segment on ESD was proposed for the Belgrade Conference (CEP/AC.13/2005/2). The Steering Committee at its first meeting in December 2005 confirmed its preparedness to organize a segment on ESD during the Belgrade Conference and requested its Bureau to follow up on this decision.

18. The Bureau of the Steering Committee at its meeting on 23 February 2006 will discuss a more detailed proposal for this segment and present the proposal to the Executive Committee. The outcome of this segment might take the form of a joint statement on ESD by the Ministers of Education and of the Environment highlighting the progress made in the process and giving strategic guidance for its continuation.

*Sustainable Production and Consumption Patterns*

19. Ministers in Kiev underlined the importance of the shift towards sustainable production and consumption patterns and encouraged regions, sub-regions and countries, as appropriate, to devise programmes to accelerate this shift. They referred to the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, which calls for the “development of a 10-year framework of programmes in support of regional and national initiatives to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production patterns that will promote social and economic development within the carrying capacity of ecosystems”. Ministers pledged to encourage and promote the development of such framework of programmes, “taking them to our next conference” (ECE/CEP/94/Rev.1, para 28).

20. In the pan-European region, several regional, sub-regional and national meetings were held since the initiation of the Marrakech Process. A European Stakeholder Meeting on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) was held in Ostend, Belgium, in November 2004. The meeting identified, among other issues, a need to improve coordination, integration and coherence among various EU strategies and policies, encourage the development of the business environment for the increased innovation and use of available SCP methodologies, and called for cooperation with transition countries in setting up sustainable infrastructure in areas such as waste, housing, energy, and promote public-private partnerships to increase investments in these areas.

21. As an input to the Belgrade Conference, Sweden has put forward a proposal to map out the status and trends of particular SCP sectors, such as waste, mobility, pollution, water, etc. and to carry out a compilation of government policies/frameworks which are already in place or in the pipeline. UNEP stands ready to collaborate and discuss elements of this proposal further. This exercise could provide background material that would constitute a basis for discussion and the starting point for the development of SCP programmes for the pan-European region. It would be closely linked to the assessment process currently carried out in preparation for the Belgrade conference by the EEA and UNEP.

*UNECE Multilateral Environmental Agreements*

22. Strengthening the implementation of regional conventions and protocols, and encouraging efforts to improve their efficiency, effectiveness and coherence is one of the major goals of the “Environment for Europe” process agreed upon by Ministers in Kiev. The Working Group may wish to consider how progress achieved and further strengthening of the implementation of the various instruments might be addressed at the Belgrade Conference. The European Union is suggesting that an independent evaluation be made of the effectiveness of the UNECE’s environmental legal and ‘soft law’ instruments.

23. Other issues suggested by UNEP are environment and security and environmental law and diplomacy.

#### D. Sub-regional Focus

##### *Environment Strategy for EECCA*

24. Ministers in Kiev adopted the Environment Strategy for EECCA. They decided to review the implementation of the Strategy at the Sixth Ministerial Conference (ECE/CEP/105/Rev.1 para 19).

25. The Task Force for the Implementation of the Environmental Action Programme (EAP Task Force), in cooperation with other relevant international bodies and Regional Environmental Centres (RECs), was invited to lead efforts to facilitate and support the implementation of the Environment Strategy for EECCA. The EAP Task Force will present an assessment of progress in implementing the Strategy to the Belgrade Conference. At the WGSO meeting it was suggested that a deeper analysis of both the progress achieved and causes of failure in the implementation of commitments by EECCA countries should be undertaken. Moreover, a realistic road map on how to overcome these problems, including policies for capacity building, should be prepared as a next step.

26. Ministers furthermore decided that the Central and East European sub-programme of the EAP Task Force as well as the work of the Project Preparation Committee in the accession countries should be phased out by 2004. They agreed to consider at the Belgrade Conference the relocation of the secretariat functions, currently with the OECD and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), to Eastern Europe, the Caucasus or Central Asia subregion.

##### *Progress and Prospects of the Central Asian Initiative on Sustainable Development*

27. At the first meeting of the WGSO the Central Asian States drew attention to the Central Asian Initiative on Sustainable Development, which was developed as a so-called 'type 2' partnership for the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 with the main goal to build favourable political, institutional, economic, information and other conditions for achieving sustainable development goals in Central Asia. In the Kiev Ministerial Declaration a special sub-item (ECE/CEP/94/Rev.1, paragraph 63) was devoted to this initiative. The partners of the initiative plan to prepare a special report on progress in its implementation for the Belgrade Conference. They would like to include a separate item in the agenda of the Belgrade Conference on the progress and prospects of the Central Asian Initiative.

28. There may be further proposals for sub-regional topics to be addressed at the Conference by the host country in consultation with ministers from South-Eastern European countries (SEE), following the Ministerial Meeting for SEE, planned to be organised in the mid of May 2006, with the main objective to collect views and ideas from this region.

#### E. Cooperation with other ministerial processes

29. Ministers in Kiev agreed on the need to make cooperation with other ministerial processes in the region more effective and to limit the number of ministerial conferences. They explicitly mentioned the Environment and Health and the Transport, Environment and Health processes as well as the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe. They also agreed to invite the above-mentioned Ministers to future “Environment for Europe” conferences and to involve them in the preparatory work, as appropriate (ECE/CEP/94/Rev.1, para 68).

30. Two high-level meetings are scheduled to take place in 2007: the mid-term review of the WHO Health and Environment process and the third UNECE/WHO High-level Meeting on Transport, Environment and Health . The Working Group might wish to explore whether there are clear, subject –driven synergies between these meetings and the Belgrade Conference.

### **III. EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF THE BELGRADE CONFERENCE**

31. There could be a short Ministerial Declaration providing strategic directions for the future of the Environment for Europe process. In addition there might be a Chair’s summary outlining major substantive outcomes of the Conference.