

## **Elements of the Russian Federation position on the “Environment for Europe” reform process**

The sixth «Environment for Europe» ministerial conference, held from 10 to 12 October 2007 in Belgrade, adopted a resolution on the EfE reform process with an aim of increasing its efficiency and improving environment throughout the region.

Russia looks forward to reform negotiations. The ministers in Belgrade authorized the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy to work out a reform plan in cooperation with the EfE partners by the end of 2008 for its subsequent adoption at the UNECE session in 2009.

The Russian Federation highly appreciates the «Environment for Europe» process as an important mechanism for bilateral and multilateral cooperation throughout the UNECE region and as a platform for the interaction of a wide range of stakeholders.

The Russian Federation considers that the time has come to have a fresh look at the format, goals and priorities of the EfE process.

We will stress the following points during negotiations:

- the EfE process should remain within the framework of the UNECE;
- «environment for Europe» conferences should be held once in 4-5 years;
- the thematic focus of the EfE process should be based on topical needs and priorities of the UNECE member-states in environmental protection and search of ways and means of converging environmental legislation and implementation practices.

The following should be at the core of the process:

- joint monitoring and assessment of the environment in the UNECE region in order to determine major environment problems;
- exchange of experience in environmental policies and harmonization of approaches where it is appropriate;

- joint action to solve common environmental challenges, including transboundary issues, by facilitating full-fledged implementation of the environmental agreements that are in force in the UNECE region.

The EfE process should be based on the following principles:

- awareness of political and environmental realities in the UNECE region;
- the major parties of the process are the member-states, represented by government officials;
- the EfE process should be implemented strictly within its mandate and should not deal with issues beyond it (so called “parallel processes”);
- there should be no division into “advanced” and “backward” countries in the UNECE region Europe within the EfE process;
- the documents of the EfE ministerial conferences should avoid political recommendations;
- the environmental assessment and, in particular, the environmental performance reviews should be carried out on the basis of differentiated approach taking into account specific conditions, environmental protection requirements and priorities of member-states;
- the EfE member-states should focus on implementing already existing international legal instruments. However, new mechanisms might be worked out if required;
- it is important to continue activities of working groups that contribute positively to the EfE process (on environmental monitoring and assessment, in particular).

All elements and issues of environmental situation in the UNECE region that were revealed by regular environmental monitoring should be discussed within the EfE process.

When preparing environmental action plans, parallelism and duplication should be avoided. Focus should be made on those areas that are not covered by existing processes, instruments and programs.

Geographical terms and the UNECE sub-regions should be clearly defined. They should not be related to political associations (e.g., “the EU countries”). The

EfE process should not focus exclusively on the environmental challenges in Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe. Each of the UNECE sub-regions should be subject to environmental assessment in the future EfE documents. Experts from different sub-regions should be involved for such assessment activity. The term “EECCA” should be excluded from the UNECE glossary. The countries covered by this term should be divided into separate sub-regions (e.g.: Central Asia, Caucasus, Eastern Europe – Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine). The Russian Federation is to be considered in the context of environmental assessment separately without being attached to any geographical sub-region.

The mandate of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy should be expanded to include the function of a preparatory process for future ministerial conferences “Environment for Europe”.

The functions of the Secretariat for Environmental Action Program Task Force (EAP) should be partially delegated from the OECD to the Regional Environmental Centers (REC) on the basis of a specially developed plan. The final decision on the issue of secretariat functions of RECs depends on financing and should be taken on the premise of the EAP member-states generally agreeing that RECs are capable to fulfill such duties.

The next Pan-European environment assessment report should be prepared on the basis of more intensive consultations with all the countries of the region and take into account their views. Thus more precise and balanced assessments will be provided. All the environmental monitoring and research should appropriately take into account official data of the member-states and engage more countries’ government experts.