Implementation of the SPECA Work Plan for 2010-2011, adopted by the Governing Council at its fourth session on 13 November 2009, has proceeded according to schedule. Activities carried out by the six SPECA Project Working Groups since the last session of the Governing Council are summarized below.

I. PROJECT WORKING GROUP ON WATER AND ENERGY RESOURCES

Dam safety

The project to improve safety of dam operations in Central Asia started in 2006. There are two main results from the first phase of the project: (i) a model national law on safety of large hydraulic facilities, including dams, intended to be a base of national harmonized legal frameworks for dam safety; and (ii) a draft of the regional agreement on cooperation on dam safety, which stipulates, *inter alia*, exchange of information and notification of other countries in case of accidents with dams.

The second phase of the project was implemented during the period 2008-2011 with funding from Finland and the Russian Federation. The main results of the second phase include further negotiations and development of the draft regional agreement, input to the development of dam safety legislation in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as well as joint training for experts in the region. A Technical Regulation for all five countries has been approved, and a safety review of the Kirov dam on the Talas river has been performed. Information about the project can be found on: [http://www.unece.org/env/water/damsafety.htm](http://www.unece.org/env/water/damsafety.htm).

Water, Environmental and Energy Information

The “Central Asian Regional Water Information Base” (CAREWIB) Project, funded by Switzerland, was launched in 2004. It is implemented by the Scientific Information Centre of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (SIC-ICWC) in Tashkent in cooperation with UNECE and UNEP/Grid-Arendal. The project includes a Water Portal ([www.cawater-info.net](http://www.cawater-info.net)).
that provides access to Central Asian water information, a bibliographic database of Land and Water Resources Use in the Aral Sea basin, lists of and links to donors active in the Aral Sea basin, databases for the Aral Sea basin, the Amudarya and the Syrdarya river basins, etc. The portal also hosts the websites of various projects. The project further includes the development of an Information System on Water and Land Resources in the region for experts and decision makers in the five Central Asian States. Phase 2 of the project started in the end of 2007.

In the second phase of the CAREWIB project, the focus has been on developing national water information systems. An evaluation of the project made by the Swiss donors is presently being discussed by the involved partners. The result of this discussion will be decisive on whether the project will be continued.

**Development of Cooperation on the Chu and Talas Rivers**

On 26 July 2006, water relations in Central Asia took a significant step forward when the Kazakh-Kyrgyz Chu and Talas Rivers Commission was inaugurated with the support of UNECE. The establishment of the Commission created a mutually beneficial way for Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan to share responsibility for water infrastructure used by both countries. A new project in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) - started in 2008 and funded by Finland - supports the further broadening of cooperation to improve the joint management of the Chu and Talas rivers, to include, among others, protection of ecosystems and stakeholder participation in the river management.

**Regional Dialogue and Cooperation on Water Resources Management in Central Asia**

The Programme “Trans-boundary Water Management in Central Asia” was launched in 2008 by the Government of Germany. A Programme component “Regional dialogue and cooperation on water resources management” is implemented in 2009-2011 by the UNECE. It includes work on regional institutions, international water legislation and regional Guidelines/Principles for water management, as well as development of monitoring and information exchange.

**Water quality in Central Asia**

The United Nations Development Account has made funding available to UNECE for a project to improve cooperation and policy related to water quality in Central Asia. The project started in the beginning of 2009 and is being undertaken in collaboration with the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC). The project is aiming to establish common principles for measurement, exchange of information and joint assessment. The development of more efficient national policies, including the standards and principles applied in the regulation of environmentally harmful activities, is another key aspect. As the water quality monitoring has seriously deteriorated since the early 1990s, it is a challenge to establish a basic monitoring network. The project has contributed to a more active discussion of water quality issues in the region and a regional plan for further development of cooperation in this area was presented during the Astana Ministerial Conference in September 2011.
Baku Initiative on Energy Efficiency and Conservation

In 2006, the SPECA Coordinating Committee endorsed the Baku Initiative on Energy Efficiency and Conservation which had been previously reviewed by the Project Working Group on Water and Energy Resources. As a follow-up, meetings in 2008 and 2009 focused on identifying priority activities under the Baku Initiative. Recommendations included (a) the development of a network of energy efficiency institutions among SPECA member countries; (b) the development of a regional project on energy efficiency in buildings; and (c) the development of a regional concept on energy efficiency.

A number of projects have been initiated in 2009 and 2010 to support these recommendations. The project “Strengthening Institutional Capacity to Support Energy Efficiency in Selected Asian Countries”, funded by the Korean Energy Management Corporation (KEMCO), includes the SPECA subregion in its analysis. The results of the preliminary study are available, and guidelines for institutions are currently being developed. An Asia-Pacific regional meeting was held in April 2010 which included Central Asian countries.

With regards to the concept on energy efficiency in the SPECA region, a project “Supporting the implementation of the Baku initiative on energy efficiency and conservation for sustainable and inclusive development” was initiated in 2010 to work with countries to develop an energy efficiency concept that will allow cooperation in implementing energy efficiency policies at the subregional level. Though initially only four of the SPECA member countries are included under the concept, it is hoped that further SPECA member countries will join this initiative, subject to available funding.

In addition to this, the “Eco-efficiency and Sustainable Urban Infrastructure in Asia and the Pacific” project incorporates a study on eco-efficient public buildings in Tajikistan along with a number of eco-efficiency activities in other Asian cities.

Within the framework of “Financing Energy Efficiency for Climate Change Mitigation” Project, UNECE has been working on enhancing the capacity of its Member States in Eastern Europe and Central Asia to attract private sector financing.

Following this successful Initiative of the UNECE, the Project “Global Energy Efficiency 21” was launched in 2009 by all Regional Commissions, including ESCAP, to replicate this initiative in other regions. The Project was funded by the Russian Federation. The GEE21 workshops were held under the First and Second Energy Efficiency Forums (in Astana in October 2010 and in Dushanbe in September 2011). Through the GEE21, it is expected that more countries from Central Asia will participate in strengthening the capacity of each country to foster energy efficiency market formation, public-private partnerships and to attract more private sector investment.

The Project “Development of the Renewable Energy Sector in the Russian Federation and in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries”: Prospects for Interregional Cooperation” was funded by the Russian Federation and launched by UNECE in 2008. The project significantly contributed to regional cooperation. Five SPECA member countries – Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan – were actively involved in the project activities and the regional networks. National Reports from participating countries have been elaborated and commissioned by UNECE. A strategy to promote an enhanced investment climate for renewable
energy technologies has been prepared. The final publication will be issued by the end of 2011 and disseminated among all SPECA member countries.

The United Nations Development Account has made funding available for a Project “Mitigating climate change through attracting foreign direct investment in advanced fossil fuel technologies”. The Project was launched in 2010 and will be executed by the UNECE in cooperation with UN DESA, ESCAP and UNCTAD (from 2011). Five SPECA member countries – Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan – are involved in the project activities.

The objective is to enhance governments’ abilities to attract foreign direct investment into advanced fossil fuels technologies to support energy security, energy efficiency and low-carbon sustainable development.

The Cooperative Project “Methane Capture and Use: Best Practice Guidance for Effective Methane Drainage and Use in Coal Mines” was launched in 2008 by UNECE, Methane to Market Partnership (M2M Partnership) and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA). The Best Practice Guidance publication is intended for managers, mine operators, regulators, and government officials. The publication has been launched in March 2010. The workshops and seminars to disseminate the findings to mining professionals were held in China (2010), Kazakhstan and Ukraine (2011). It is expected that more countries from Central Asia will be interested in the Guidance.

With the support from the Russian Federation, in 2011 ESCAP has initiated the project on development the online database of policy and legal frameworks for energy efficiency and clean energy technologies. The online database will include policy and legal documents, standards and regulations related to the development of energy sector, energy efficiency and clean energy technologies for the countries of Central Asia and neighbouring countries. National experts from each participating country are currently involved in data selection and uploading relevant information to the database. The working prototype of the Database has been already demonstrated at the Second International Energy Efficiency Forum in Dushanbe (12-14 September 2011). Further studies with a view to identify market opportunities for energy efficiency in Central Asia are planned for 2011 and 2012.

The outcome of the studies is planned to be discussed at an interregional workshop (between the countries of North and Central Asia and North-East Asia) on energy efficiency in Urumqi, China in 2012.

II. PROJECT WORKING GROUP ON TRANSPORT AND BORDER CROSSING

The annual sessions of the Project Working Group on Transport and Border Crossing (PWG-TBC) serve as an effective cooperation mechanism to address the specific problems of transit transport from, in and through SPECA member countries. Improvement of international transit transport infrastructure and services, as recognized in the Almaty Programme of Action, facilitates further integration of SPECA member countries into international trade and the global economy.

The ESCAP resolution 63/9 on Implementation of the Busan Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific and the Regional Action Programme, phase 1 (2007-2011)
reiterated its support for the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action for the benefit of landlocked and transit developing countries.

The 16th session of the SPECA Project Working Group on Transport and Border Crossing, held in Almaty, Kazakhstan on 20-21 April 2011, discussed specific issues relating to transport policy, infrastructure and facilitation. Main conclusions and recommendations include:

1. The PWG reaffirmed the importance of the international legal instruments and invited SPECA member countries to intensify their efforts to accede to and effectively implement the conventions. In this respect, the PWG encourages SPECA member countries which are not yet parties to the Agreement concerning the transport of dangerous goods by road (ADR) and the Agreement concerning the transport of perishable foodstuffs (ATP) to accede to them as soon as possible.

2. The PWG highlighted the need to identify any outstanding issues related to the accession to and implementation of the conventions, and requested the UNECE and ESCAP secretariats to provide assistance in assessing the implications of acceding to and implementing the transport-related international legal instruments, when possible.

3. The PWG invited those SPECA member countries that have not yet done so to take measures towards acceptance, approval or ratification of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network and the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network. The PWG also encouraged SPECA member countries to actively participate in ESCAP activities related to the development of an intergovernmental agreement on dry ports.

4. The PWG welcomed the initiative of NIITK on the preparation of the overview of the transport sector in the SPECA member countries and requested them to provide their comments/suggestions on the draft overview before the document is published on the SPECA Transport website. In this respect, the PWG noted the role of NIITK as an institute of technical support through the Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the implementation of the PWG-TBC projects and activities, and highlighted the need for financial and other assistance to NIITK along with continuing advisory assistance by ESCAP and UNECE.

5. Welcoming the progress made in the implementation of the project on the development of Euro-Asian transport linkages, the PWG took note of the expert group meetings organized within the framework of the Euro-Asian Transport Linkages Project in the second half of 2010 in Istanbul, Turkey, and Turkmenbashi, Turkmenistan, and encouraged SPECA member countries to actively participate in the project.

6. Highlighting the importance of the effective cooperation and coordination among all relevant stakeholders in the public and private sectors for the formulation and implementation of international transport facilitation measures, the PWG noted the current status/progress of SPECA member countries in establishing/strengthening national coordination mechanisms for trade and transport facilitation, and noted the availability of the UNECE and ESCAP funds for workshops and advisory services at the request of member countries.

7. The PWG was informed on the Development Account Project in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The PWG took note that the project may be expanded to other SPECA member countries in future.
8. The PWG noted with satisfaction the tangible results achieved by the UN Development Account project on Improving Global Road Safety: setting regional and national road traffic casualty reduction targets, jointly undertaken by five UN Regional Commissions, and invited SPECA member countries to take actions to respond to the decade of action for road safety and to embrace the UN work undertaken at global and regional levels.

9. The PWG noted the progress achieved in the development of the common CIM/SMGS consignment note, and encouraged SPECA member countries to consider actively participating in the project to contribute to the creation of the unified rail transport law and promoting facilitation of railway transportation, in particular through an effective participation in the Group of Experts which met for the first time on 6 May 2011 in Geneva.

10. The PWG noted the potential benefits of Public-Private Partnership modalities and encouraged SPECA member countries to take advantage of the training materials prepared by UNECE and ESCAP.


III. PROJECT WORKING GROUP ON TRADE

Since the last session of the SPECA Governing Council, the SPECA Project Working Group on Trade (PWG on Trade) has continued the implementation of its Work Programme. As indicated in the strategic planning documents of the PWG, the main focus remained on trade facilitation – a key area for overcoming obstacles and achieving trade integration and development in the Central Asian region. Building synergies with various regional partners, such as EurAsEC, the Commission of the Customs Union of EurAsEC, CAREC, the Islamic Development Bank and other agencies, received much attention. Another key area, activities in which expanded significantly in the last year, was the SPECA Initiative on Aid-for-Trade. The SPECA Aid-for-Trade Roadmap Initiative and the accompanying network of donors, international organizations and recipients were developed further. A pivotal event was the organization, back-to-back with the fifth session of the PWG on Trade, of the first SPECA Aid-for-Trade Ministerial Conference in December 2010. In more detail, the following activities were carried out:

- UNECE, ESCAP and the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan, in close collaboration with the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, UNDP, ITFC, ITC, UNIDO, and other organizations, organized on 1-2 December 2010 in Baku, Azerbaijan, a Ministerial Conference on Aid-for-Trade. This event was part of the SPECA Aid-for-Trade Roadmap Initiative, which UNECE organized in collaboration with the governments of the region and other international institutions. The objective was to involve the SPECA member countries even more in the WTO Aid-for-Trade programme as beneficiaries. The UNDP Regional Office for Europe and CIS in Bratislava prepared and presented at the Ministerial Conference national and regional need assessments. ITC and UNIDO organized capacity-building seminars parallel to the AfT Ministerial Conference.

- All SPECA member countries (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) were represented: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, and Kyrgyzstan on the level of ministers, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan on the level of deputy ministers. Several donors participated, notably, Finland, which is the main
supporter of the UNDP Aid-for-Trade project for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

- The Ministerial Declaration reiterated the will of the SPECA member countries to participate in the Aid-for-Trade programme, and set up a Council on its implementation and monitoring.

- The fifth session of the SPECA Project Working Group on Trade took place on 2 December 2010, after the Ministerial meeting decided that the SPECA Project Working Group on Trade should actively provide institutional support and “national ownership” of the initiative.

- The follow-up mechanism to the Baku Ministerial Conference included weekly teleconferences of the main participating agencies, which discussed the various technical cooperation projects identified in the AfT initiative. A matrix of national projects was developed and presented to various WTO Aid-for-Trade meetings.

- The trade facilitation work, which UNECE and other implementation agencies had implemented for years, made significant progress in 2010-2011. A major event was the support that the Kazakhstan Single Window project received from its Government, but also the increasing involvement of the Commission of the Customs Union of Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan, which also adopted the Single Window as a priority, and developed a Feasibility Study. UNECE and the Commission of the Customs Union co-organized a major conference on the Single Window on 7-8 April 2011 in Moscow, in which Kazakhstan played an active role.

- The Inter-parliamentary Assembly of EurAsEC and UNECE continued their close cooperation on identifying the legal impediments to trade facilitation, the Single Window and data harmonization and e-commerce, with a view to harmonize the related legislation in the EurAsEC Member States in the area of trade procedures, e-commerce and information exchange. A joint publication was issued on the matter.

- The first phase of the Single Window project in Azerbaijan was finalized, and there are functioning Single Window modules at the borders of Azerbaijan.

- UNECE and GIZ continued their support for the Single Window project in Kyrgyzstan.

- Experts from Central Asia participated in the Single Window and trade facilitation capacity-building events organized by UNECE and ESCAP in Bangkok and Seoul.

The UNECE is working also with the SPECA member countries on promoting inter-agency electronic data interchange. The UNECE proposals on harmonization and implementation of information standards and on inter-agency data exchange were submitted to and were discussed at the CIS Interstate Council meeting in Turkmenbashi, Turkmenistan (10-12 May 2011) as well as other meetings. SPECA member countries expressed their interest in further cooperation with UNECE on identified issues.
IV. PROJECT WORKING GROUP ON STATISTICS

The sixth meeting of the SPECA Project Working Group on Statistics (PWG) took place in Geneva on 16 June 2011. It was attended by representatives from the following SPECA member countries: Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Representatives from the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS Stat), the European Commission (Eurostat), the World Bank (WB) and Statistics Norway also participated in the meeting. During the meeting, participants emphasized the importance of the SPECA PWG on Statistics in identifying and prioritizing needs for national and regional capacity-building programmes but also addressed some issues concerning the scarce financial and human resources allocated through the Programme to the implementation and follow-up of these projects.

The outcome of the discussions was that in order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of capacity-building activities the PWG on Statistics could be a suitable platform for enhancing the coordination and monitoring of technical cooperation activities in the SPECA region. As such, the SPECA PWG on Statistics should operate as a partnership group for capacity-building and invite major multilateral and bilateral agencies/donors to participate.

In order to support the development of national statistical capacities in the SPECA region, UNECE, in cooperation with other national and international donors, organized in 2010 and 2011, 12 seminars and training workshops and 21 advisory missions on various statistical domains related to population censuses and migration statistics, economic development, monitoring the achievement of MDGs, gender and violence against women, sustainable development, statistical quality, statistical literacy, and communication with users.

Global Assessments of national statistical systems (GA) were conducted in Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan with the objective to reviewing the compliance of national statistics with international standards and methodologies, including the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. Long-term development plans to improve national statistics have been drafted by these countries based on recommendations formulated in the respective GA’s reports. Global Assessments of SPECA national statistical systems will continue in Tajikistan in 2012 and a follow-up assessment in Kazakhstan in 2013.

V. PROJECT WORKING GROUP ON KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY

This progress report contains activities carried out/to be carried out by the UNECE and ESCAP secretariats within the framework of the SPECA Project Working Group on Knowledge-based Development (PWG on KBD), or addressing topics within its thematic areas in 2011. These activities are in line with the Programme of Work for 2010-2011 of the PWG, which was adopted at the second session in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan on 12 November 2009 and the revised Programme of Work for 2011, adopted at the third session in Astana, Kazakhstan on 30 September 2010.

The UNECE and ESCAP secretariats, within the framework of implementation of the Programme of Work of the SPECA PWG on KBD, organized/will organize the following capacity-building events in 2011:

• UNECE Workshop on best practices in the sphere of Public-Private Partnerships (Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 26 January 2011).
• UNECE High-level Policy Seminar on Developing Innovative Entrepreneurship (Haifa, Israel, 28 March - 2 April 2011).

• UNECE Capacity-building meeting on the UNECE Public-Private Partnerships Initiative (Geneva, Switzerland, 18-19 April 2011).


• UNECE Training Workshop on Public-Private Partnerships within the fourth Annual CEE and SEE Summit (Prague, Czech Republic, 8 June 2011).


• UNECE International Conference "Promoting Eco-innovation: Policies and Opportunities" (Tel Aviv, Israel, 11-13 July 2011).


• UNECE International Conference on Knowledge-based Development and Innovative Entrepreneurship (Baku, Azerbaijan, 24-25 November 2011).

• Third meeting of the UNECE Expert Group on Public-Private Partnerships for CIS countries (Baku, Azerbaijan, 25 November 2011).

• UNECE Special Meeting on the Innovation Performance Review of Kazakhstan (Geneva, Switzerland, 30 November 2011).

• UNECE Special Meeting on the UNECE Public-Private Partnerships Initiative (Geneva, Switzerland, 1 December 2011).

• ESCAP/APCICT Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Subregional Training of Trainers Workshop on APCICT’s "Academy of ICT Essentials for Government Leaders" (Academy) Modules 9 (ICT and Disaster Risk Management) and Module 10 (ICT and Climate Change) (Issyk-kul Lake, Kyrgyzstan, 7-9 September 2011).

• ESCAP/APCICT Launch of the Tajik version of Academy Curriculum & National Workshop in Tajikistan on Academy Module 3 (e-Government Applications), Module 7 (ICT Project Management in Theory and Practice) and Module 8 (Options for Funding ICT for Development) (Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 13-18 September 2011).
• ESCAP Regional workshop on cooperation and information sharing for flood risk reduction and extreme weather events in Central Asia (Baku, Azerbaijan, 23-25 November 2011).

Representatives of the SPECA member countries also participated/will participate in the following events:

• Regional Training of Trainers on Academy Modules 9 and 10 (Seongnam City, Republic of Korea, 22-26 February 2011)

• Second Regional Forum on ICT Capacity-Building (Incheon and Cheonan, Republic of Korea, 24-28 October 2011). The Forum will provide an opportunity to review the progress achieved by APCICT, deliberate upon the lessons learned, and accordingly formulate the roadmap for its future work so that APCICT can deliver more impactful services to ESCAP Member States. The Forum will also help facilitate multilateral cooperation, providing a suitable occasion for ICT and development stakeholders to share their experiences and best practices, assess current needs, and identify areas for mutual collaboration. The Regional Forum will be a large-scale event with over 100 participants from around 30 countries, including Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan.

• ESCAP Expert Group Meeting on Regional Knowledge and Cooperation for Comprehensive Multi-Hazard Risk Management in Asia and the Pacific (Bangkok, Thailand, 27-29 June 2011).

• Second session of the ESCAP Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction (Bangkok, Thailand, 29 June - 1 July 2011).

• Consultative Meeting on Regional Cooperative Mechanisms on Space Applications for an Effective Disaster Management and Sustainable Development (Colombo, Sri Lanka, 25-27 October 2011).

• Sixth session of the UNECE Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration (Geneva, Switzerland, 30 November – 2 December 2011).

VI. WORKING GROUP ON GENDER AND ECONOMY

The SPECA Working Group on Gender and Economy (WG) is committed to support its member countries in developing gender-sensitive policy responses to economic challenges. It aims to enhance women’s economic opportunities and to promote gender equality in Central Asia, contributing to implementing the objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action and to reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Working Group on Gender and Economy met on 20 September 2011 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. In addition to reviewing activities over the period 2010-2011, the Group shared examples of gender-sensitive economic policies in Central Asia, identified priorities, discussed project proposals for new activities and agreed on a Work Plan for 2012-2013.
Capacity-building activities to support women entrepreneurs in the SPECA region

As in previous years, the Centre for International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel and the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Centre in cooperation with the UNECE have continued to run biannual international training workshops on “Support systems for women in small business at national and local levels” (13-29 April 2010 and 7-24 March 2011) and on “Women entrepreneurs and information communication technologies” (2-19 August 2010). The next workshop on information and communication technologies will take place on 7-20 December 2011.

The capacity-building workshops, held in Russian, are targeted at women entrepreneurs from Central Asia. They provide support, guidance and managerial tools on the use of new technologies in the management of small businesses. They further address government institutions in charge of small and medium-sized enterprise development at national and local levels, women’s business associations and other civil society organizations to build their capacity to strengthen the support environment for women entrepreneurs. To date, 252 professional women have participated in these trainings. Over the years, the training scheme has not only played an important role in strengthening the support for women entrepreneurship but has also facilitated networking among women entrepreneurs across Central Asia.

In March 2011, the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Centre and the UNECE, within the framework of the activities of the SPECA PWG on KBD, organized a High-level Policy Seminar on Developing Innovative Entrepreneurship, which related to government policies aimed at fostering innovative enterprises. A part of the discussion was dedicated to the design and implementation of gender-sensitive policies in order to enhance the participation of women in the innovation process.

Assessments of the business environment for women entrepreneurs

With the financial support of the Governments of Finland and Sweden two assessments of the business environment for women entrepreneurs were conducted in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan in 2010-2011. These assessments generate new knowledge and improve our understanding of the gender differences in the perception of the business environment and of gender-specific factors and constraints to entrepreneurship development. They complement previous research undertaken in cooperation with the International Labour Organization to analyze the achievements and perspectives of women’s entrepreneurship development in pilot countries in Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan) with the purpose of developing policy recommendations for the improvement and further development of entrepreneurial opportunities for women in the region.

A national workshop was organized in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, in May 2011 to consult key stakeholder groups on women’s entrepreneurship development and to share preliminary research findings of the study on the business environment for women entrepreneurs in Tajikistan.

A policy seminar on women’s entrepreneurship development in Central Asia was organized in Geneva on 19 September 2011 to disseminate the findings of the research, to identify gender gaps in entrepreneurship and to discuss the policy measures needed to increase women’s economic opportunities in the region. The seminar brought together 40 policymakers and representatives from women’s business associations, finance institutions and international and regional institutions.
active in Central Asia. The documentation for the policy seminar is available on the UNECE website (www.unece.org/gender/policyseminar). The seminar was organized in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme Regional Office for Europe and CIS in Bratislava with the active participation of the members of the WG.