

### Housing

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Housing Challenges to be addressed through a Charter on Sustainable Housing

There are many [challenges facing housing](#) in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in the UNECE region. The continuing economic crisis and high unemployment levels have limited access to affordable and healthy housing. The housing sector is responsible for some 40% of energy consumption, and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions also has an inordinate impact on the environment because of its high consumption of primary resources (land and non-renewable building materials). A changing climate has resulted in an increased number of natural disasters, such as earthquakes, floods, landslides and not to mention human-generated disasters, all of which have resulted in large-scale damage to housing and have become a serious challenge in the UNECE region. All this calls for urgent action by governments to jointly address issues of sustainable housing and urban development.

On 7 May 2014, government ministers, heads of agencies and representatives from 27 countries supported by representatives from UN agencies, municipalities, academia, private sector and NGOs decided to address these challenges through a Charter on Sustainable Housing in the UNECE region. The first step in this process was the agreement on the scope and objectives of the Charter. This is the outcome of a four year political process on the development of an international instrument to support sustainable housing led by the Bureau of the UNECE's Committee on Housing and Land Management.

The proposed Charter will develop a framework for concerted actions by member States to improve housing and living conditions in the region. It will support the building of green and socially inclusive human settlements and the long-term sustainability of the housing sector as well as strengthening the implementation of existing UNECE housing guidelines, policy recommendations, action plans and other documents. □

For more information, please visit: <http://www.unece.org/hlm/welcome.html> or contact Gulnara Roll at: [gulnara.roll@unece.org](mailto:gulnara.roll@unece.org).

## UNECE signs Memorandum of Understanding with the Electric Power Council of the Commonwealth of Independent State

UNECE promotes sustainable energy development, including energy efficiency, renewable energy, and access to modern energy services in the member countries of the Commonwealth of Independent State (CIS). The CIS Electric Power Council (EPC) is also deeply involved in those matters. This served as a good basis for negotiating the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between UNECE and EPC CIS. The MoU was signed by UNECE Deputy Executive Secretary Andrey Vasilyev and the President of EPC CIS, Minister of Energy of the Russian Federation Alexandre Novak, at the 45th meeting of the EPC CIS in Baku, Azerbaijan, on 25 April 2014, in the presence of ministers and deputy ministers of energy of CIS countries.

According to the text of the Memorandum, the parties will cooperate, among other issues, in promoting interregional cooperation in energy; ensuring greater energy security, sustainable energy supply and environmental protection; supporting the increased use of advanced technologies to enhance energy efficiency and cleaner energy production; improving the legal and institutional frameworks for increasing energy efficiency and renewable energy development; and improving the investment climate for the application of cleaner and energy-efficient technologies and renewable energy development. In his remarks, Mr. Vasilyev stressed the importance of coordinating activities of regional and international organizations for the benefit of their members.

Scott Foster, Director of the UNECE Sustainable Energy Division, presented the outcomes of the recently completed UNECE project on enhancing synergies in the CIS national programmes on energy efficiency. He outlined barriers to the implementation of energy efficiency measures in CIS countries and proposed possible UNECE contributions to improving the capacity of CIS countries to implement policies and practices on energy efficiency. □

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## UNECE and ESCAP review energy efficiency investment projects in member countries

Energy efficiency is recognized as one of the most cost-effective and sustainable ways to mitigate climate change and enhance energy security but getting financing for energy efficiency projects remains a difficult task. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the United Nations Economic Commission

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### MoU



### Energy

for Europe (UNECE) held the [Inter-regional Workshop on Energy Efficiency Investment Projects Pipeline](#) in Bangkok on 23-24 April 2014. It was organized under the [Promoting Energy Efficiency Investments for Climate Change Mitigation and Sustainable Development](#) global project supported by the UN Development Account. The project has been implemented by all UN Regional Commissions since 2012 in order to strengthen the capacity of their Member States to attract investments in this critical area. Among its key objectives are assistance to project developers in preparing financially sound and bankable project proposals and promotion of policies that support energy efficiency investments.



The Workshop was a follow-up to the International Training Courses on Business Planning for Energy Efficiency Projects held in 2013 in Almaty and in Istanbul. The participants (over 40 from 19 countries of the UNECE and ESCAP regions) stressed the importance and usefulness of the capacity building activities undertaken by UNECE and ESCAP. The Workshop reviewed the investment project pipeline, provided financial analysis of selected projects, and looked at the experience of financial institutions with energy efficiency financing instruments. The role that Energy Service Companies (ESCOs) could play in making energy efficiency projects a reality was discussed. The event also served as a place for dialogue on energy efficiency investments between project developers and government officials with the focus on barriers and success factors. As a result of training courses for project developers, significant progress has been made in attaining financing for their project proposals. Out of the 27 energy efficiency projects presented at the workshop, eight had secured financing from various sources (equity, commercial loans, soft loans, grants, government funding, international financing institutions and mezzanine financing) and other projects are in various stages of applying for financing for their implementation. □

For more information, please visit: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=35165>  
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## Environment

### **UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents takes further steps towards alignment with the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals and the improvement of industrial safety in the region**



Representatives of the Parties to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents, gathered in Geneva on 28 and 29 April 2014 at the fourth meeting of the Working Group on Development of the Convention, unanimously agreed on a revised annex I to the Convention that will align it with the United Nations Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) and provide a great degree of consistency with relevant European Union legislation. The Working Group also agreed to include new substances with specific threshold quantities.

Annex I to the Convention lists hazardous substances for the purposes of defining hazardous activities. Parties to the Convention are obliged to identify such hazardous activities within their jurisdiction and ensure that neighbouring countries are notified. As such, revised annex I has the potential to enhance industrial safety in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) region by encouraging industry and national Governments to introduce relevant prevention, preparedness and response measures.

Revised annex I will be forwarded to the Parties for adoption at the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to be held from 3 to 5 December 2014 in Geneva. The proposed amendments will also achieve a high degree of consistency with European Union (EU) Directive 2012/18/EU, also known as the Seveso III Directive, the main piece of EU legislation dealing with on-shore major accident hazards involving dangerous substances. Seveso III will apply from 1 June 2015.

Revised annex I, as agreed by the Working Group, defines 21 categories of hazardous substances, classified according to the rules of the GHS, instead of the 8 generic categories of hazardous substances listed in the original annex. Another major change is the number of substances covered, which has practically quadrupled: from 12 to 44 substances listed.

At the fourth meeting, representatives of the Parties also assessed other possible amendments to the Convention. The Working Group agreed to propose to the Conference of the Parties that it consider the development of amendments with regard to the provisions on definitions, public information and participation, the frequency of meetings of the Conference of the Parties and the application of amendments to new Parties. It will also recommend that some areas merit further guidance or decisions by the Conference of the Parties, including with regard to land use planning and review of compliance. □

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