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COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Thirteenth session,
9-11 October 2006

REPORT ON THE THIRTEENTH SESSION

Addendum

PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 2007-2008

Executive Summary

At its thirteenth session, the Committee on Environmental Policy adopted its programme of work for 2007–2008 as contained in this document.

The Committee carries out work in accordance with its strategic goals as contained in the “Future UNECE strategic directions for the environment”, which it adopted in 2003 to structure and adapt its programme of work for the next 5 to 10 years.

The specific activities in the draft programme of work for 2007–2008 relate to the following main processes and strategic goals:

1. Preparation of the sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe”, to be held in Belgrade in 2007
Goal 1: Contributing to the “Environment for Europe” process; programme activities 4 and 7;
2. Environmental performance reviews (EPRs) and environmental monitoring
Goal 2: Improving environmental governance; programme activities 1 and 2;
3. Follow-up and support to the regional environmental conventions and protocols
Goal 3: Improving the effectiveness of international legal instruments; programme activity 3;
4. Regional follow-up to Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation
Goal 5: Contributing to regional implementation of the environmental pillar of sustainable development; programme activities 5 and 6;
5. Promotion of cross-sectoral synergies through cooperation with other UNECE principal subsidiary bodies and international organizations
Goal 4: Integrating environmental concerns into sectoral policies; programme activity 8.

SUBPROGRAMME 01 – ENVIRONMENT

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY 1

ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

The Environmental Performance Review (EPR) programme will continue its second cycle of reviews on the basis of the recommendations adopted by the fifth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” in Kiev (2003) and by the Committee. All countries that are members of UNECE but not of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) are eligible for review. The second review will focus on the particular needs of countries, with emphasis on integration (sustainable development), implementation and financing. The second round of reviews also aims to support the implementation of the Environment Strategy for Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA).

Furthermore, in accordance with the decision of the Committee, the reviewed countries are invited to provide voluntary interim reports on the implementation of the first review’s recommendations within three years of the conclusion of the first review.

Work accomplished

The EPR Expert Group continued to support and to offer advice for the preparation and conduct of the EPRs; to carry out detailed expert reviews prior to the Committee’s peer review; and to report back to the Committee. At its thirteenth session, the Committee reviewed the draft of the second EPR report of Ukraine and adopted the recommendations it contained. The Committee welcomed the interim reports by Montenegro and Serbia on their progress in improving the environment and its management following the recommendations of their first environmental performance review. The Committee took note of the information provided on the launches of the EPRs of Moldova (July 2006) and Belarus (September 2006).

Work to be undertaken

The second reviews of Montenegro and Serbia (2006–2007) are under way. The recommendations in the reports will be peer-reviewed during the next extraordinary session of the Committee, scheduled for 29 May 2007, with a view to having both reviews available in published form at the Belgrade Conference.

The delegations of Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Uzbekistan expressed their countries’ interest in being reviewed next. Launches of completed second EPRs will be undertaken at the request of reviewed countries once translations into the national languages are available. In 2007, launches are planned for the EPRs of Ukraine, Montenegro and Serbia.

A document on critical issues involved in the implementation of environmental policies as highlighted by the EPRs will be prepared for the Belgrade Conference. The report will offer recommendations giving direction for creating the necessary preconditions for achieving a better environment in EECCA and South-Eastern Europe (SEE) countries.

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY 2

ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING

The Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment (WGEMA) will continue to strengthen the environmental information and observation capacities in EECCA and to focus on areas emphasized by the ministers in Kiev, in particular the monitoring component of the Environment Strategy for EECCA. It will contribute to the fourth assessment report on the state of the environment for the Belgrade Conference (the Belgrade Assessment report).

Work accomplished

At its sixth session (12–14 June 2006), the WGEMA reviewed the extended outline of the Belgrade Assessment report and the progress in its preparation, including coordination with assessment and data collection activities undertaken in other international forums. A contract was concluded with the European Environment Agency (EEA) to facilitate the participation of EECCA countries in the preparation of the report. The WGEMA considered and revised the Guidelines on the Application of the Core Set of Environmental Indicators for Countries of EECCA, together with the recommendations on their implementation, to be submitted to the Belgrade Conference. It held an in-depth discussion on measures to improve environmental monitoring and reporting by enterprises in EECCA, with participation by key stakeholders, including central and territorial (subnational) environmental authorities, business and industry representatives and environmental NGOs. The WGEMA reviewed air quality systems in EECCA countries and made recommendations regarding their adaptation to international requirements (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2006/2).

Work to be undertaken

The WGEMA will:

(a) Review draft chapters and a summary of the Belgrade Assessment report prepared by EEA, and review the EECCA data compendium to be compiled by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on the basis of the WGEMA's Guidelines with the aim of supplementing the Belgrade report; and at its meeting in early 2007, discuss promotional activities for the Belgrade Assessment report and lessons learned from its preparation;

(b) Continue strengthening environmental monitoring and reporting capacities in EECCA and SEE by:

- (i) Finalizing and publishing the *Guidelines on the Application of Environmental Indicators*, once these have been endorsed by the Committee;
- (ii) Uploading the indicator descriptions onto the WGEMA website, following the example of the EEA Indicator Management System, possibly together with the EECCA data collected by UNEP on the basis of the *Guidelines*;
- (iii) Preparing practical guidelines on legal, regulatory, institutional, financial and technical measures to improve enterprise monitoring and reporting;

- (iv) Developing, possibly through the organization of a workshop in early 2007, guidelines on the preparation of indicator-based territorial (subnational) state-of-the-environment reports in EECCA;
- (v) Reviewing additional monitoring networks in EECCA to propose measures for their adaptation to meet international reporting requirements.

Once the above guidelines and reports have been endorsed by the Committee at its extraordinary session in May 2007, they will be transmitted to the Working Group of Senior Officials (WGSO) of the Belgrade Conference for adoption by the Conference.

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY 3

FOLLOW-UP AND SUPPORT TO THE UNECE ENVIRONMENTAL CONVENTIONS AND PROTOCOLS

Since the 1970s, five regional environmental conventions and 12 protocols have been negotiated and adopted in the framework of UNECE. The responsibility for implementation activities lies with the governing bodies.

All the protocols have entered into force except the three protocols adopted at the Kiev Conference: the Protocols on Strategic Environmental Assessment, on Civil Liability and Damage Caused by the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents on Transboundary Waters, and on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs).

The Committee provides a catalysing forum in which all government representatives, including the governing bodies of the conventions, can share their experiences in promoting and assessing the implementation of these regional environmental instruments and identify means of improving compliance with them. Furthermore, the Committee supports, as appropriate, the implementation of the conventions and their protocols.

Work accomplished

The fifth informal meeting between the Bureaux of the Committee on Environmental Policy and of the governing bodies of the UNECE environmental conventions was held on 27 June 2006 at the invitation of the Chair of the Committee on Environmental Policy. The meeting's aims were to continue sharing experiences and seeking synergies and areas of cooperation, and to assess and promote the implementation of environmental legal instruments in the region.

In line with the recommendations from the previous meeting, the informal discussions focused in particular on: (a) preparations for the Belgrade Conference; (b) the outcome of and follow-up to the Second Regional Implementation Forum on Sustainable Development; and (c) the online questionnaire for reporting on the implementation of the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution as a possible model for the other UNECE environmental conventions to follow.

Work to be undertaken

It is envisaged that informal meetings between the Bureaux of the Committee and the governing bodies of the conventions will continue to be held annually. The next informal meeting is tentatively scheduled for 12 February 2007, and it was agreed that participants would discuss the UNECE conventions' contribution to the Belgrade Conference.

The secretariat will coordinate the preparation of a paper on "Implementation of UNECE multilateral environmental agreements" for submission to the Conference. The paper will assess the progress achieved and problems encountered in the effective implementation of the conventions and will provide an overview of capacity-building activities in the UNECE region. It will provide a basis for ministers to make policy recommendations for enhancing the effective implementation of the conventions by governments.

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY 4

ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY FOR EASTERN EUROPE, CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA (EECCA)

The Environment Strategy for Countries of EECCA aims to strengthen the environmental protection efforts of the EECCA countries and to facilitate partnerships and cooperation between these and other countries, and with other stakeholders in the UNECE region.

The ministers in Kiev invited the Task Force for the Implementation of the Environmental Action Programme for Central and Eastern Europe (EAP Task Force) to lead efforts to facilitate and support the implementation of the Strategy. The Task Force promotes the achievement of specific objectives of the Strategy with several other Facilitating Organizations, including UNECE, and Regional Environmental Centres (RECs). The Task Force, in cooperation with relevant international bodies, and on the basis of information provided by the EECCA countries, was requested to keep the Committee on Environmental Policy informed about progress in achieving the objectives of the Strategy.

Work accomplished

A conference of environment ministers from the EECCA countries and their partners was held in Tbilisi on 20–21 October 2004 to discuss the action programmes and partnerships developed since the Kiev Conference to implement the Environment Strategy, and to provide further impetus for their development and implementation.

Three subregional workshops were held in May/June 2005 in Moscow, Almaty and Tbilisi to discuss challenges faced by EECCA countries in achieving the objectives of the Environment Strategy.

The EAP Task Force developed an EECCA Partnerships Database and a document which enumerates the activities carried out by the different Facilitating Organizations, including UNECE, to support each objective of the Strategy.

A region-wide meeting was organized in May 2006 to discuss the structure of the EECCA Strategy Progress Assessment Report (EECCA Report) to be submitted to the Belgrade Conference. For the preparation of the report, the OECD/EAP Task Force Secretariat set up a cooperation framework for assessing progress in the implementation of the Strategy. The framework involves EECCA environment ministries, Facilitating Organizations, EEA and NGOs.

At its thirteenth session, the Committee took note of the activities carried out in the framework of the EECCA Strategy and provided guidance for the preparation of the EECCA Report.

Work to be undertaken

UNECE serves as a Facilitating Organization for several objectives of the Environment Strategy. Implementation of the Strategy will continue to be promoted as part of UNECE's activities, namely the Environmental Performance Review and environmental monitoring and assessment programmes, the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) and the Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development, as well as work under the environmental conventions.

Further relevant ongoing and planned activities in the subregion related to the UNECE conventions include projects to support the development of transboundary water cooperation under the work programme of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) as well as the Internationally Supported Assistance Programme for EECCA and SEE countries to enhance their efforts in implementing the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention).

At the fourteenth session of the Committee, the EAP Task Force will present the draft assessment report on the implementation of the EECCA Strategy.

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY 5

ENVIRONMENT, WATER AND SECURITY INITIATIVE IN CENTRAL ASIA

Central Asian countries launched the Initiative on Environment, Water and Security at the Kiev Conference. The ministers in Kiev recommended starting preparations for a partnership agreement on transboundary water problems, environment and security in Central Asia as part of the follow-up to the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and as a contribution to the EU Water Initiative and other water initiatives in the region. The Committee will provide a forum for exchanging information and discussing progress in the implementation of related activities.

Work accomplished

Since the Kiev Conference, the countries in the region and the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC) have sought political support for the Initiative through, for instance, the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, and other entities in the United Nations system and

have signed a memorandum of understanding with the European Union on cooperation with the EU Water Initiative.

CAREC and the Central Asian countries have carried out activities on environmental education, public participation and transboundary water. The European Union and CAREC held a high-level meeting in April 2006 to strengthen the Initiative's implementation.

Work to be undertaken

In line with the Kiev Ministerial Declaration, the region's countries and the relevant organizations may consider developing a partnership agreement for implementing the Initiative. The agreement could be then submitted for endorsement to the Belgrade Conference.

UNECE will promote the implementation of the Initiative notably through: (a) the Environment and Security Initiative; (b) activities under the Water Convention; and (c) the assistance programmes to EECCA, such as the one carried out by the Industrial Accidents Convention, organizing capacity-building activities to facilitate the application of the Convention.

The UNECE secretariat will continue to support the Initiative, in particular by providing technical assistance in collaboration with other partner organizations.

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY 6

ENVIRONMENT AND SECURITY

The Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) is a joint initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNEP, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and UNECE that builds on the combined strengths and field presence of the lead organizations to perform three key functions: assessment and monitoring of linkages between environment and security; capacity-building and institutional development; and integration of environmental and security concerns and priorities into international and national policymaking. The initiative is aimed at strengthening the implementation of UNECE regional environmental conventions.

Work accomplished

To date, assessments have been made for three regions: SEE, Central Asia and Southern Caucasus. In addition, assessments have been initiated in Eastern Europe, specifically Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. After the assessments, programmes of work were established and a number of projects started (see www.envsec.org).

Work to be undertaken

UNECE will continue to collaborate within the framework of ENVSEC, in particular through projects supporting the implementation of UNECE regional conventions.

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY 7

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The ministers in Kiev requested the Committee to develop, in consultation with major stakeholders, a communication strategy to raise awareness of environmental problems in the UNECE region and to increase the visibility of the “Environment for Europe” process as a policy framework for environment-related initiatives in the region.

Work accomplished

At its twelfth session, the Committee, taking note of the revised draft “Environment for Europe” communication strategy prepared by the secretariat in consultation with stakeholders and the Committee’s Bureau, requested the WGSO for the Belgrade Conference to revise the strategy for further consideration after the contents of the Conference agenda had been defined. The WGSO at its second meeting decided that a communication plan should be developed for the Belgrade Conference. At its third session the WGSO considered a Communication Plan prepared by the secretariat, which included a list of proposed communication activities and a proposal to brief journalists.

Work to be undertaken

The secretariat, the authorities hosting the Belgrade Conference, NGOs and other stakeholders will implement the proposed activities as presented to the WGSO, subject to the availability of funds. Other communication activities are being undertaken by “Environment for Europe” partners to enhance the visibility of the Conference.

The secretariat will continue to post documents for the Committee’s sessions and those related to the “Environment for Europe” process on the UNECE website and will update its media contact points.

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY 8

INTEGRATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND SECTORAL POLICIES

Integrating environmental concerns into the activities of other sectors, whether economic or social, is one of the key challenges for the effective implementation of environmentally sound sustainable development principles. Since the Rio Conference, actions and programmes in the UNECE region have moved towards that goal, but significant efforts are still needed through a wide range of policy, legal, institutional and financial measures and incentives.

The Committee on Environmental Policy has established cross-sectoral linkages, activities and cooperation with other UNECE committees (e.g. Housing and Land Management and Transport) and the conventions’ governing bodies, as well as with other international organizations, such as the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (WHO/EURO). UNECE environmental cross-sectoral programmes should be further encouraged to ensure effective

support for national and regional initiatives to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production in order to promote social and economic development.

8.1 EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

At the Kiev Conference, ministers agreed on the preparation of a UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and invited UNECE to work with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Council of Europe on a regional strategy for ESD.

Work accomplished

Following the decision of the Committee at its eleventh session, the High-level Meeting of Environment and Education ministers (Vilnius, 17–18 March 2005) adopted the UNECE Strategy for ESD as a practical instrument for promoting sustainable development through education. The meeting also adopted the Vilnius Framework for Implementation, under which a Steering Committee on ESD and an Expert Group on Indicators for ESD were set up to facilitate the coordination and review of the Strategy's implementation. At its first meeting (on 13–14 December 2005), the UNECE Steering Committee on ESD amended and adopted its workplan, which outlines activities to support implementation and includes a reporting mechanism. The Committee also considered a first draft of a set of indicators to measure the extent and effectiveness of implementation of the Strategy.

Work to be undertaken

The Steering Committee on ESD will hold its second meeting on 4–5 December 2006 to review the implementation of its programme of work. The Committee will consider the proposal for a high-level segment on ESD for the Belgrade Conference to discuss the implementation of ESD, with a focus on achievements, challenges and future steps in terms of reaching the six objectives of the UNECE Strategy. The final outcome of the work by the Expert Group on Indicators for ESD will be submitted to the Committee for endorsement. The Committee will also consider the outline of the report on progress in implementation of the Strategy, which will be submitted to the Conference.

8.2 TRANSPORT, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

The Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) was established in 2002 under the joint auspices of UNECE (the Environment and Transport Divisions) and WHO/EURO. THE PEP aims at promoting policy integration and sustainable transport development, notably in urban areas, through capacity-building and awareness-raising activities. It focuses on and brings particular benefits to countries in EECCA and SEE.

Work accomplished

At its fourth session (10–11 April 2006), the Steering Committee of THE PEP assessed the progress made in the implementation of its work programme and provided guidance on further implementation. It welcomed in particular the launching of the Clearing House on Transport,

Environment and Health; the organization of a workshop on sustainable urban transport and land-use planning in Tbilisi (18–20 October 2006); and the preparation of guidance on institutional arrangements for policy integration.

It also examined the preparations for the third High-level Meeting on Transport, Environment and Health, to be held in 2008. The Committee agreed that the main objectives of the High-level Meeting should be to:

(a) Strengthen Member States' commitment to the integration of transport, health and environment policies at the national level, with a special focus on the challenges faced by EECCA and SEE countries;

(b) Reinforce the role of THE PEP as the platform for promoting such policy integration and secure the necessary resources and support.

Work to be undertaken

The Steering Committee will continue the preparations for the third High-level Meeting. A number of "lead countries" were appointed to coordinate the development of proposals corresponding to the main objectives of the third High-level Meeting. The Committee on Environmental Policy is invited to further encourage, support and coordinate efforts in the transport, environment and health sectors to implement THE PEP, and in particular to prepare for the third High-level Meeting. The secretariat continues to facilitate the implementation of the Steering Committee's work programme and the preparations for the High-level Meeting.

8.3 ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

WHO/EURO Ministerial Conferences have been organized since 1989 and bring together ministers of health and environment and other stakeholders to strive for consensus and make political commitments to promoting a safe and healthy environment.

Work accomplished

At its thirteenth session, the Committee was informed about the further implementation of the commitments made at the fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Budapest, 23–25 June 2004) as contained in the Budapest Conference Declaration and in the Children's Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe (CEHAPE). CEHAPE provides a framework for developing Member States' plans and policies on health and the environment. The third meeting of the CEHAPE Task Force took place in Dublin in March 2006.

Ministers entrusted the European Environment and Health Committee (EEHC) with following up on their decisions and serving as a steering committee for the preparation of the next conference. EEHC held three meetings in 2005 and one in May 2006, which focused on CEHAPE Priority Goal 2 "Preventing and reducing the health consequences from accidents and injuries and pursuing a decrease in morbidity from lack of adequate physical activity".

Work to be undertaken

EEHC will continue its activities in accordance with its workplan and will report annually on progress to the WHO Regional Committee for Europe and the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy. The next meeting of EECH will be held on 27–28 November 2006 at the premises of the REC in Szentendre (Hungary), with a focus on preventing and reducing the health consequences of accidents and injuries.

In line with the request from ministers in Budapest, WHO will convene an intergovernmental meeting to carry out a midterm review of the process. This meeting will take place in Vienna on 13–15 June 2007. The fifth Ministerial Conference will be held in Italy in 2009.

EEHC will work in close cooperation with the “Environment for Europe” WGSO.