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Cross-sectoral activities:

Environment and security

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The Environment and Security Initiative

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The present paper provides a brief overview of the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC), as well as a summary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) ongoing activities carried out under ENVSEC.

The Committee may wish to consider the information provided.

I. Environment and security risks

1. It is widely acknowledged that population growth, increased economic activity and improved standards of living lead to intensifying competition for and even conflicts over limited natural resources such as freshwater, cropland, pastures and forests. Moreover, climate change will act as a threat multiplier, by changing the timing and distribution of precipitation, temperature, and increasing the occurrence of extreme weather events. Natural resource scarcity and climate change may pose a serious risk to the countries' sustainable development and stability, as well as international security.

2. At the same time, shared natural resources, including transboundary waters open pathways for enhanced cooperation and confidence building. Ecosystems and environmental problems ignore political boundaries and sectoral divides making it difficult for countries or groups to address them unilaterally. This interdependence can drive countries to cooperate in order to sustainably manage their transboundary natural resources. Joint environmental monitoring programmes, international river basin management, transboundary cooperation for environmental protection, and regional marine agreements are all examples of how environmental initiatives can increase dialogue and strengthen cooperation between countries.

II. The Environment and Security Initiative

3. ENVSEC was established in 2003. It provides a platform for regional cooperation on assessing and addressing environmental challenges, which threaten or are perceived to threaten security, societal stability and peace, human health and livelihoods. ENVSEC is a partnership of six international agencies with specialized and complementary mandates and expertise. The Partners are: the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the ECE and the Regional Environment Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC-CEE). The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is an associate member and participates with its Science for Peace and Security Programme.

4. The ENVSEC Partners assist the Governments in Eastern Europe, South-Eastern Europe, Southern Caucasus and Central Asia to identify and reduce interlinked environmental and security risks. ENVSEC collaborates closely with Governments, particularly foreign and environment ministries, national experts and non-governmental organizations.

5. The ENVSEC Partners have a joint Secretariat hosted by UNEP (Geneva) and work closely together to coordinate their activities and find synergies where possible.

6. Key results achieved by the ENVSEC Partners include:

(a) Improved monitoring, information exchange and cooperation on environmental and security risks in several transboundary river basins;

(b) Remediation solutions for hazardous mining sites and the secure elimination of hazardous chemicals such as obsolete pesticides and rocket fuel;

(c) Strengthened regional coordination and capacities for radioactive waste management and affected site rehabilitation;

(d) Improved policies and regulations on environment and security challenges such as dam failures, illegal logging and wild fires;

(e) Increased regional monitoring and coordination on adaptation to the impacts of climate change on security;

(f) Increased awareness and participation of civil society in environmental and security decision making at local level.

7. The added value of ENVSEC as an inter-agency partnership can be summarized as follows:

(a) A coordinated regional approach and diverse projects with far reaching, and tangible environment and security benefits;

(b) Policy advice backed up by concrete demonstrations on the ground;

(c) An extensive network of stakeholders and focal points for improved national ownership;

(d) A long term approach to environment and security supported by an extensive portfolio of lessons learned;

(e) A multi-donor trust fund for transparency, efficiency and accountability.

III. ECE input: value-added of multilateral environmental agreements

8. Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) administered by ECE are an important pillar of ENVSEC's activities and provide a value-added to the partnership. The number of ENVSEC projects that ECE is engaged in is increasing, highlighting the importance of the MEAs in conflict prevention, preventative diplomacy, confidence-building and regional cooperation to reduce conflicts. A list of projects is found in the annex.

9. In the work programme of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention), ENVSEC projects play a prominent role. There are several examples of projects supporting the development of transboundary cooperation in specific basins (Kura, Dniester, Aral Sea basin) as well as pilot projects on water and adaptation to climate change in transboundary basins.

10. The Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) provides an institutional framework for addressing both environment and related security risks and developing transboundary cooperation and good neighbourly relations. In collaboration with ENVSEC Partners pilot and capacity building projects are being implemented.

11. The Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention) promotes active international cooperation between countries, before, during and after an industrial accident. The Assistance Programme of the Industrial Accidents Convention benefits from cooperation with ENVSEC Partners in regions such as South-East Europe and Central Asia.

12. While ECE is not directly involved, ENVSEC Partners such as OSCE are engaged in the development of so called Aarhus Centres in all regions where ENVSEC is active.

13. There are also other ECE activities of relevance to environment and security. One example is the component "Regional dialogue and cooperation on water resources management" in the GIZ Programme "Transboundary Water Management in Central Asia" in 2009–2011 with the objective to strengthen the capacity of regional institutions for water resources management in Central Asia. The participation of ECE in a second phase of this project is being discussed.

IV. Future development of the Environment and Security Initiative

14. Challenges and priorities for the future development of ENVSEC include:

(a) A renewed focus on security with a view on regional dialogue, sustainable development and impacts of climate change.

(b) Further development of cooperation and achievement of synergies between ENVSEC Partners as well as outreach to a broader network of actors in the field of environment and security.

(c) Improved financial sustainability; broadening of the donor base. Current main donors are Finland, Austria and Sweden. The ENVSEC portfolio currently includes 53 projects with a budget of US\$ 41.18 million.

Annex

List of selected ENVSEC projects with the involvement of or linked to ECE MEAs

I. ENVSEC projects under the Water Convention in cooperation with other agencies:

- (a) Capacity building for cooperation on dam safety in Central Asia (Phase II and III);
- (b) Enhancing Regional Exchange of Water Resource Information in Central Asia (CAREWIB II);
- (c) Transboundary cooperation and sustainable management of the Dniester River basin – Phase III;
- (d) Ratification of the Water Convention in Georgia and development of an agreement on the management of transboundary watercourses shared by Georgia and Azerbaijan;
- (e) A project on the Drin River, shared by Albania, Greece, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo (UN administered territory under UN Security Council resolution 1244) and Montenegro aims to improve transboundary cooperation in the basin;
- (f) Bi-/multilateral arrangements for prevention of transboundary environmental conflicts: the Timok River shared by Bulgaria and Serbia;
- (g) Pilot projects on water and adaptation to climate change in transboundary basins:
 - (i) Testing of the Guidance document developed under the Water Convention - Climate change adaptation and transboundary flood risk management in the Sava River Basin;
 - (ii) Reducing vulnerability to extreme floods and climate change in the Dniester River basin (Dniester III Flood and Climate);
 - (iii) Adaptation to climate change in the Chu-Talas river basin (inception and implementation phases);
 - (iv) River basin management and adaptation to climate change in the Neman river basin.

II. ENVSEC projects under the Espoo Convention in cooperation with other agencies:

- (a) Joint environmental monitoring, assessment and exchange of information for integrated management of the Danube delta region (Phase II) (on-going, led by UNEP);
- (b) Development of capacities for application of the Espoo Convention in Eastern Europe (Belarus) with participation of Lithuania (2009-2011);
- (c) Trainings and capacity development for reaching EU standards and multilateral Conventions (monitoring, pollution prevention and control, EIA and permitting, etc.) (in South-Eastern Europe, led by REC-CEE);

- (d) Strengthening implementation of the Espoo Convention in Azerbaijan (on-going till mid-2012);
- (e) Capacity Building Workshop on the implementation of the Espoo Convention in the Caucasus subregion (Tbilisi, May 2011).

III. ENVSEC projects under the Industrial Accidents Convention:

- (a) Assistance to Central Asian countries to implement the Industrial Accidents Convention (implementation phase);
- (b) Trainings and capacity development with Industrial Accidents Convention's Assistance Programme in South-Eastern Europe.

IV. ENVSEC projects under the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention)

- (a) A number of Aarhus Centres is being established and supported by ENVSEC Partners such as OSCE;
 - (b) Support to the implementation of the Protocol on Pollutants Release and Transfer Register (PRTR Protocol) to the Aarhus Convention.
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